

Stories and Gaps: A study of narrative, discourse and musical awareness in a group of Year Six children's responses to music

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Abstract

Music educators in the classroom aim to expose students to a variety of styles and genre of music through active listening. Engaging children in listening to music that is unfamiliar to them is problematic. This study sets out to explore what Year Six children respond to in the music they prefer and how this compares to their responses to examples of 'classical' music in an effort to find areas of commonality and transferability.

A constructivist perspective underpins this study. In examining the children's responses to music in their own words, their understandings about music and how it shapes their lives becomes evident.

Case study is used to examine the listening responses of Year Six children. Children express in their own terms what they listen to and for within music: music of their own choice, and then "classical" music. They share their expectations and give examples of "good" music.

The findings that emerge from this study fall into two broad themes: those relating to children's choices, and those that relate to the nature and importance of the discourses about listening to music within the educational setting. These findings have a number of implications. Firstly, they indicate the importance of "stories" the children gained from the music listened to. Secondly, they suggest the significance of the relationship children form with music. Thirdly, they mark the importance of an awareness of the different perspectives and cultural settings from which music listening and appreciation is viewed.

This study focuses on Year Six children's responses to and relationships with music. However, while it examines a single aspect of music education at this level, the implications may be explored within other levels and curriculum areas.

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Chapter One: The Study

The development of aural skills is the basis for music education. In the draft Arts Essence Statement (2005) *The Sound Arts – Music*, it is stated “By learning to make sense of sound, students can appreciate and value the aesthetic qualities of music” (p.1), and that one of the ways students develop literacy in the worlds of sound is by listening and responding. Listening to music needs to be an active process for the development of personal understandings about music to occur.

Listening is the most accessible music experience. For many people it continues after formal music lessons have discontinued through lack of interest, application or support. It is an activity experienced on different levels ranging from the emotional response, the evocation of memories associated with the music being heard, through to the identification of different musical elements within the music.

Music in our environment or ‘soundscape’ has increased in recent decades. Music in one form or another is important to nearly all people. It is imposed on us in the street, in shops, malls, offices, waiting rooms and lifts, and yet large numbers of people choose to provide themselves with more music. They switch on radios and stereos, buy CDs; they watch television channels devoted to playing music videos. They buy DVDs of concert performances, down-load music from the internet, create and listen to personalized collections on i-Pods, play in bands and orchestras, sing in choirs, attend concerts or the opera, sing along with karaoke machines or sing with a computer game that gives feedback on your accuracy of pitch and rhythm. There are special collections of music for relaxing, romancing, partying, meditating, eating and exercising. It is possible to listen to one’s preferred music of choice for hours on end. Children become expert listeners from an early age. What are they responding to? How do they decide what to download from the internet? How do they decide

what to request on a radio show or television show? How do they decide what to buy, what to listen to? What is it that catches their ear?

This study set out to investigate the way Year Six children experience the music they listen to out of school time, what Year Six children hear in the music they listened to, the place listening to music has in their lives, how they decide what music to listen to, and what makes a piece music “good” to listen to. It also attempts to find out why children at this level find it difficult to respond musically to what is termed “classical” music during formal listening music lessons in the classroom.

Research question and focus.

The key question for this study is:

How do Year Six students choose the music they prefer to listen to?

This question gives rise to further questions that are also relevant within my study:

‘What influences the choices they make?’

‘What knowledge do they bring to the music?’

‘How can awareness of their preferences be used to extend their awareness of and responses to other styles of music?’

‘What are the implications for the teaching and learning of listening skills in the classroom music lesson?’

This study is concerned with the thoughts of Year Six students; the decisions they make about the music they listen to, the knowledge they bring to the music, the bases of their decisions and thinking.

It attempts to describe the relationship of a small group of children with the music they listen to, the culture of listening to music and as such could be seen as an ethnographic study. Fetterman (1998, p.3) tells us that people act on their individual perceptions, and while those actions have real consequences “the subjective reality each individual sees is no less real than an objectively defined and measured reality.”

Flockton and Crooks (2001) published the results of a music survey conducted with Year Four and Year Eight students. The survey sought information from students about their involvement in and enjoyment of music, both in music curriculum experiences at school and in music related activities out of school time. The survey revealed that outside of school, the most common activity for both age groups was listening to music. For both age groups it was also rated the most enjoyed activity outside of school (Buckton, 2003, p.1), with 98% indicating they liked to listen to music “lots” or “quite a lot” in Year Eight, and 91% of Year Four students indicating they liked to listen to music “lots” or “quite a lot”. There was no information about Year Six children, but it I assumed the results would be similar. While this information indicates the popularity of listening to music for children, it does not tell us what they attend to within the music. It does not tell us how they engage with the music, how they make sense of what they hear, their expectations of the music, the knowledge they have of the music they listen to, the relationships they have with the music they hear.

This study set out to redress some of these questions and omissions, to examine the gaps between the students' knowledge and experience and my expectations as a teacher.

Personal Perspective

I have a strong interest in teaching music in the classroom. As a generalist teacher, I have worked to develop classroom programmes to integrate music into as many subjects of the curriculum as practicable, while developing the children's skills in singing, recorder playing and focused listening to music. While completing a paper on reflective practice I realised I had made an assumption about children's music experiences when they entered my classes. Because the vast majority of the children in my classes did not have formal music lessons, I assumed they had *not really listened* to music and I had to teach them how to do so. I had assumed they just 'went along' with whatever was on the radio or television, succumbing to commercial pressures without a thought as to why they preferred one song or piece of music to another, that they had not had experienced 'proper' music, and that they had no expertise in listening to music. Over a period of time I became aware of evidence around me showing children making choices about the music they listened to, the music they preferred, and equally importantly, the music they rejected.

I made an effort to redress my assumptions in my classroom music programme by inviting the children to share music they liked with the class. I didn't really know what I was expecting. It opened my eyes as the Year Six children showed they could justify their choices and preferences. I was, however, disappointed in the seeming lack of 'musical' reasons for choices. The reasons the children gave for the preferences were 'extra-musical', and I began to wonder why this was the case: lack of formal music education? Reluctance to use musical terms? A stage of their development? My presence intimidating them? Peer pressure? I had to rethink my assumptions as the children showed levels of critical thinking I did not expect. I became interested in the influences, expectations and thinking involved in children's listening choices, how they related to the music they listened to. How I could use that knowledge to expand their music experiences? How could I extend their thinking

about and learning of music and make it more relevant to their lives? Other aspects of my personal perspective arose during this study that I will deal with in the chapters on methodology and findings.

In the next chapter, I examine some of the literature around the topics of listening to music and responding to music. I explore some of the different fields of research that relate to this study, and how the act of listening to music is viewed through different lenses.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

This chapter briefly surveys the literature I read to orient myself with regard to this study and highlights writings that were relevant to the direction I took. I accessed readings in the fields of psychology, music education, music research, philosophy, aesthetics and sociology. The readings I have covered have various degrees of relevance to the themes that have emerged from this study.

In 1998, Small coined a new term: “Musicking”. This term was designed to take the place of the term ‘music-making’, which describes only the performing part of the aspects involved in a musical performance. Musicking describes the act of taking part in a musical performance, not just as a performer, but also as a listener or as a provider of material for a performance. It reinforces the complexities of musical performance and the various roles within. This recognition of the act of listening as an active process relates strongly to this study.

Researching Responses to Music

Listening to music and the way people engage with it is problematised in the music literature. For example Sloboda (1985, p.5) explains the primary problem the student of listening processes as being “to find a valid way of tapping the moment-to-moment history of mental involvement with the music”.

This difficulty in examining listening responses is explored by other researchers. Bundra (1993) examines the listening responses of school-aged children through verbal reports. She clearly states the difficulties and issues involved in investigating human responsiveness to music. She sets out the

problems with the use of inconsistent terminology by researchers in the field of feelingful response to music. She points out that terms associated with feelingful responses to music remain elusive, and that because human responsiveness is exploring the area of aesthetics, investigation has revealed there are no aesthetic absolutes. She cites investigations that have produced conflicting results, and the various ways researchers have tried to quantify and measure human responsiveness to music. She spends considerable time describing research using a device called the Continuous Response Digital Interface (CRDI), a device that allows continuous non-verbal measurement of subjects' responses to whatever variable, or variables, the investigator chooses to measure during the presentation of the music stimulus. While this is useful as a way of measuring response it does mean the investigator predetermines what the subject focuses on, the subject being guided and influenced by these choices. In this study, the participants are to make their own choice of response.

Hargreaves (1986) discusses the various influences on children's musical ability, including the effects of practice and training, and the home and cultural environment. He points out the difficulties with drawing conclusions about the relationships between social class and musical development, indicating the cultural bias of the researchers. This recognition of researcher bias is relevant to this study for reasons discussed in Chapter 8.

Swanwick (1994) states that getting to know music, whether as performers or audience-listeners, through listening, performing, singing and playing is essentially acquaintance knowledge, but that often we hear performances or overhear part of performances for the first and last time, for example with radio broadcasts or concert programmes. In educational settings when this happens it is usually given as an example of a genre or historical period. This gives rise to the idea of listening to music as the acquisition of contextual information. He explores the difficulties in assessing musical knowledge,

how there are layers of meaning that permeate the listening experience, and the semantic differences which limit choice responses. He describes at length the work of Hentschke, who investigated what children had to say about music. Children were randomly selected from classes in English schools. From Years Two, Six and Nine (ages 7/8, 10/11, and 13/14) the research method was a structured interview which allowed some freedom to sequence questions and flexibility in responding to each child. While the interview method is prone to bias on the part of the researcher, it allows exploration of the range of musical responses without too many fixed questions which can distort the conversation and stereotype the answers. In the interview, each child was asked to listen to three pieces of music and after each one they chose from four different possibilities a card with a picture of a human figure. The four pictures depicted stick figures in various attitudes of activity or rest. The children were asked, 'which of the cards would you choose to describe the music?' After choosing a card, children were invited to write or draw something that may help them remember something about the piece. The students then listened to the same extract a second time, after which they were asked questions that are more open-ended; further conversation ensued. Then the students were asked to listen to all three extracts again then using picture cards and any drawings or notes, and each child was asked to choose the odd one out and explain their choice. This process was repeated with two other groups of three pieces. Various researchers have used this research model: Hargreaves (1986); Ward (1986); Gilbert (1990). The essential procedure is to have people look at or think about three things and decide which two have something in common and which is the odd one out.

In this way over several choices, a pattern of personal constructs is revealed, showing how the individual views or construes his or her world. The main strength of this method is that it helps children to think about the music and to give a focus for their listening the third time. Making choices is an instance of musical analysis that does not depend on words. The overall results showed that the

older children had more to say about the music than the younger children did. As the children got older, their responses showed they were becoming more analytically aware and that they were able to articulate their experience. Results revealed that some children stayed at the level of descriptions of materials, others engaged with expressive character, and some drew attention not only to materials and character but also to musical form.

Hentschke's research is useful with regard to this study in that she has examined the responses of 10 and 11 year olds. She found that while the 7 and 8 year olds comments were mainly concerned with descriptions of materials (instruments and so on) the 10 and 11 year olds responded not only regarding materials but to a great extent on the expression of the music with some comment on the form of the music. The oldest group showed more analytical awareness with more responses regarding the form of the pieces heard. According to Swanwick (1994) this development of audience-listening appears to follow the same sequence as the development of composition skills. The study was a repeat of work done in Brazil with similarly aged children. Overall, the Brazilian children had less to say regarding the music listened to, even though the researcher in Brazil was conversing with the children in her own language and city. It was noted that while the Brazilian children were willing to talk in response to the music, they often used it as a "launching pad for elaborate imaginative stories of their own or to recall specific events in their recent family and social life" (p.118). The sound materials or expressive qualities in the music seemed to act to lead away from the music to other reflections.

Like a number of the studies described in this literature review, these studies contribute to my initial understandings of the conceptual framework in which I examined the listening component of "musicking".

Dunn (2005) has investigated the notion of “creative listening” through subject-created visual representations, or figural maps. He has coined the term “intuitive listening” to include all aspects of experiencing music. He has developed a list of ten characteristics of intuitive listening. He describes intuitive listening as an active process that allows the listener to become a co-creator of the musical experience. He indicates that intuitive listening involves responses on different levels that combine to create a different experience with each repeated hearing, and that it may involve extra-musical responses. He goes on to say that intuitive listening is an authentic, lifelong human process that happens without formal instruction and that it can be influenced by formal education which can enhance the individual’s ability to interact meaningfully with music over a lifetime.

Dunn (2005) has based his study on his work with more than 300 undergraduate students in a course called “Introduction to Music: The Listening Experience”. The purpose of the course is to help students develop their listening and analytic skills through various activities and assignments involving the exploration of basic elements of music. He presented the subjects with a problem-solving task requiring them to visually present in a figural map what they heard in a musical excerpt. He examined their visual representations and verbal responses to the task to see if any of the ten proposed characteristics of intuitive listening were confirmed. Results from this study show that mapping seems to be an effective way to engage students in intuitive listening. He suggests that further study is needed to explore mapping as a way to examine how we experience music. His study does not appear to include children’s experiences, nor does it indicate if he has used vocal music for the subjects to respond to. His work is useful as a framework to examine to responses of the participants in this study.

The National Educational Monitoring Project has undertaken two surveys of New Zealand children and their involvement in music activities. These were done in 2000 and 2004. The results for each were similar. Listening to music is the most common activity related to music, and is very strongly rated the most enjoyed activity.

The National Education Monitoring Project conducted a survey of attitudes towards various aspects of music. The topics include attitudes towards music at school, time spent involved in various music related activities out of school time, and how much these activities are liked. The results for 2004 indicate that 76% of Year Four students listen to music 'lots' or 'quite often', and that 91% like listening to music 'lots' or 'quite often'. The results for Year Eight students showed 89% listening music out of school time and 95% liking listening to music lots or quite a lot. This data is useful in that it confirms what many parents already know and experience. The data, however, do not tell us what it is the children are listening to, or what they are listening for within the music. It does not tell us how they develop preferences, nor does it tell us what musical or other understandings they have of the music to which they listen.

Listening tasks within the National Education Monitoring Programme assessment involved matching a musical phrase to correct notation, matching word rhythms to correct rhythmic notation, listening to and distinguishing melodies, recognizing chord changes, recognizing different instruments, identifying different types of music, distinguishing rhythmic patterns. None of these tasks requires children to use their own words to describe or explain their experience of music in their own words.

Support for the National Education Monitoring Project findings comes from Drummond (2003). He suggests that while we have inherited an image of young people who know nothing of the world and

who need to be trained and educated to cope with it, this image is “stunningly out of touch with reality. In fact young people are far more attuned to the world today, and their needs in it, than are their teachers” (p.57). He quotes Barrett, McCoy and Veblen (1997, p.17), “Students use music as a frame of reference to organize their personal histories”. He also quotes from an article by Stalhammer(2000, pp.38 and 43) “95% of the young people of Sweden name music as their main leisure interest [and] it can be supposed that they possess a large capital of experience in this area.”

O'Neill and Green (2001) examine the research into social groups and music learning. They give a brief overview of some of the key points in existing, current and potential research relating to six groups: gender, the family, peer networks, social class, ethnicity/religion, and musicians. They indicate that the divisions are arbitrary and artificial, and that more work needs to be done which “revolves groups around each other” (p.26). They also say they are aware of the difficulties of researching the complex combinations and changing nature of social groups:

Most of us are not aware of the fact that our musical activities are totally enmeshed in a social and cultural world. Our engagement with music leads us to ‘forget’ the grounds on which our behaviour is based. Each person’s relationship with music is subject to a ‘taking-for-grantedness’, such that our musical practices, tastes and values have become routine and invisible. (p.29)

Perhaps the most valuable observation O'Neill and Green make is the inadequacy of many of the established methods of research. These are not sophisticated enough to deal with the complexities involved, leading to the use of reductionism. Reductionism meaning that a complex system can be fully understood by analyzing it into isolated parts or simple concepts. They suggest the use of case

studies or ideographic approaches to research, pointing out that case studies have been less prominent in the study of music education and social factors.

Philosophy and Aesthetics

Music is an aural art; as such, listening is an integral part of any musical experience. Langer (1953) argues the first principle in musical hearing is to feel the form and the movement of the music which go together to make the whole event. She suggests that anything the listener does or thinks to make the experience of listening to music more meaningful is musically good. She observes that people often confuse enjoying music with enjoying themselves unmusically during music, but concedes that anything that helps concentration and “sustains the illusion” (p.148) - whether it is inward singing, following a half-comprehended score, or dreaming in dramatic images may be one’s personal way to understanding, because “listening is the primary musical activity” (p.148).

Listening to music is a perceptual act. Greene (1995) states that a perceptual act “enables a person to take a perspective on aspects of things in the sounding or appearing world. By attending, listening, gazing, a perceiver structures what presents itself” (p.26). She goes on to refer to Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s idea that perceiving details entails a return to the ‘there is’ underlying the abstract conception, to the ‘object-in-general’. She further reminds us that we are not god-like beings, we are situated beings, and can only know partial views of things. We see aspects of objects and people around us, living in incompleteness and there is always more for us to see.

Reimer (1992) examines the place of the arts in education. He uses examples of music, and the arts of painting and poetry writing to make his points about the place of aesthetic education in the arts. His perspective applies to any country that espouses the Spencerian value system, which considers the art

and humanities to be leisure-time pursuits. To justify the arts in education, Reimer examines three arguments: the claim for functionality, the claim for talent development, and the claim of aesthetic education. He points out that to justify the arts in education based on the argument of functionality is not particularly strong except as a value to foster certain values. The second argument is that specialist roles require the development and recognition of various competencies. He points out that as schools are the main institutions for enculturation, they seem to be the logical places to provide opportunities to foster and nurture artistic talent. Many individuals would miss artistic enculturation if non-school arts development were to be relied upon. Spencer's view of the best way to both enjoy and produce art is "science", meaning that the essentials of the arts curriculum are two-fold. Firstly, training in the techniques, craft, and processes required to be a functioning artist, and secondly, a supportive knowledge about what science has to say about human behaviour, human biology, human physiology, and the like, as they are related to producing art. This type of knowledge about the arts is dominant - knowing how to create them. The third justification for knowledge in the arts relates to developing literacy in the aesthetic domain. It means there is a need to develop abilities to perceive, discriminate, feel, and evaluate works of art. It means the need to understand them as objects and events with distinctive cognitive characteristics. It means to be aware of the historical, social, cultural, political, and religious contexts in which objects reside. Finally, it means to be cognizant of the many issues and controversies surrounding them.

Reimer examines the aspects of 'knowing of' or 'knowing within' the aesthetic involvement. 'Knowing within' is primarily related to the 'form' of a work of art, its sum total of interrelated parts. In music, these parts can include repetition, contrasts, variations, developments, tensions, uncertainties, and energies. He goes on to say that the perceptual process of a successful work of art "is not likely to occur once and for all with any one, particular interaction with it. Important works of

art, no matter what their style, type, genre, are those with the maximum of richness and integration of relationships possible within that style, type or genre” (p.31). This reading is relevant to the study as it investigates what children know of the music they listen to. It relates strongly to the idea of “music as a way of knowing that influences how we see the world, express our own views of the world, and come to know the world” (Ministry of Education, 2000, p.52).

Reimer also talks about the role of feeling, as a vital aspect of engaging with an artwork: “It seems to be an essential characteristic of art that we care about it in a way that involves us as creatures who feel” (p.6). He suggests that emotions serve the same purpose in works of art as the content does, and that it could be considered another type of content.

In a summary of his book *Music Matters* (1995), Elliot asks what knowledge is most worth learning by all music students. His answer is musicianship, as musicianship is the key to achieving the values and aims of music education. He tells us that musicianship, which includes listening, is a rich form of procedural knowledge, that it is context-sensitive, or situated, that is, the precise nature and content of musicianship and listenership differs from musical practice to practice. He goes on to say that musicianship is not something that is given naturally to some people and not others. It is a form of cognition - a rich form of thinking and knowing- that is educable and applicable to all. He states that listening ought to be taught and learned in direct relation to the music that students are learning to make. Recorded music should be presented in relation to and in the context of their music making. Elliot finds support for the praxial philosophy approach to music education in the work of Howard Gardner. He makes references to verbal musical knowledge:

In a domain like music, verbal knowledge (or “talk” about music) is an ancillary form of knowledge, not to be taken as a substitute for ‘thinking’ and ‘problem solving’ in the medium itself. (Gardner, 1990, as cited in Elliot, 1995, p.42)

His support for artistic listening-in-context is qualified by saying recordings need to be carefully selected: they need to be introduced in direct relation to the musical practices students are being inducted into. He adds that verbal musical knowledge should be filtered into the “continuous stream of music making and listening as needed” (p.5).

Swanwick (1999) opposes Elliot’s views because of their seeming to confuse the aesthetic with formalism. In formalism, musical meaning and our responses to music are associated mainly with internal structural relationships. Our response to music is bound up with our predictions, what we are led to expect is going to happen and the tension or release that is generated by what actually happens. Swanwick argues that this view fails to “connect musical experience with other experience in any direct way” (p.6). That music is removed from life, and turned it into an intellectual game. He suggests it is more likely that expectation and surprise are part of the “*mechanism of engagement*” (p.8) with the work. He argues that aesthetic experience is experienced when a work relates strongly to the structures of our own individual experience, when it calls for a new way of organizing or structuring understandings of previous life events. He suggests Koestler’s term ‘bisociation’, which describes the experience of seeing things by a new light, adding “It is a ‘eureka’ experience, what Langer calls the ‘triumph of insight’: we discover in the work a ‘point of view’ that seems to us at that moment to be a kind of revelation” (p.36).

Enculturation and Generative Skills

Research into music learning can be separated into two broad fields: studies that focus on enculturation and those focusing on generative skills (Sloboda, 1985). Enculturation refers to developmental processes characterized by, and resulting from, a shared set of capacities, a shared set of experiences provided by culture, and the impact of a rapidly changing cognitive system. Generative skills refer to specific experiences not shared by all members of a culture, resulting in expertise, occurring in a self-consciously educational setting, characterized by and resulting from specific specialized experiences, self-conscious effort, and instructional method. In practice, these two aspects of musical learning are often intertwined.

Buckton and Manins (1987) list the developmental order of skill development in music education as being listening, moving, singing and playing instruments, with each having its own particular skills and understandings. They point out that the first musical skill to emerge is listening, because hearing is the sense most fully developed at birth. They cite the work of Woodward, Friesen, Hanson and Coly which showed that a baby can not only hear in the womb, but can demonstrate a preference for the music of the mothers' culture through their movement responses as early as three weeks of age.

Sims (1996) investigated the listening patterns of children aged four to six years in a naturalistic free-choice setting. Her findings were that each child, given free access to listening tapes and control over the starting and stopping of a series of music extracts, showed idiosyncratic patterns of listening. Each child listened to the tape for a particular time-span, which varied from twenty seconds to over two minutes per extract, showing consistency over many encounters. Teachers were unable to predict accurately, which children would listen for long periods and which for short periods to each track. This indicated that each child's listening pattern was not easily extrapolated from his or her usual

behaviour. The children did not, on the whole, choose favourite tracks, but listened to all the selections for roughly the same amount of time, showing interest in all of the material. This study was significant for finding that children had a particular listening concentration time, and liked all of the music offered.

Hallam (2001a) outlines the research in the areas of enculturation and generative skills. There is a brief description of the beginnings of enculturation, starting at the point when the auditory system is functional, at about three months before birth. Research describing the responses of infants exposed to music in the womb and their responses before and immediately after birth, infant preferences and the development of other musical behaviours is introduced. She refers to the work of Hargreaves and North (1999) in which the development of musical taste and preferences is shown to have different periods of willingness to accept different musical styles; with phases of 'open-earedness' in early childhood up to age eight years, followed by decreases in acceptance of different styles around ages 13-14, but further increases in adulthood. Hallam concludes the section on enculturation by summarizing that the paths to musical enculturation are complex and diverse, and the "nature of engagement with music seems critical in provoking developmental change" (p.11). She points out that children are both sophisticated listeners and music-makers from early infancy onwards and the ways in which they understand music are constantly evolving. Her comment that "the kinds of music learning subsumed under enculturation are best studied by using techniques and methods that do not require technical expertise, such as listening, rather than more specialized activities such as composing or performing" (p.11) relates strongly to this study.

She also touches on the debate surrounding research of the uses of music. These include the effects of background music on behaviour, concentration and academic performance, the enhancement of

cognitive skills, enhancing self-concept, development of transferable skills that may raise academic achievement, and the promotion of spatial-temporal skills. Hallam points out the division between enculturation and generative skills is “one found in the literature” (p.14), with separate research traditions using different paradigms to explore features of each type of music learning in isolation. She suggests that a more integrated approach is required to span both types of learning, as is the need to research the complex relationships between gender, motivation, ability, personality, preference and others aspects of learners as individuals.

The theory of enculturation is a process described by Bruner (1996) in relation to music as the involuntary absorption of the sounds from the environment, while training is described as the deliberate fostering of skills, usually through the mediation of parents, a teacher or peer. Formal approaches to listening to music usually involve formal tuition on an instrument and are part of the development of specialized skills of performance and appreciation.

Thompson and Schellenberg (2002) conclude that listeners learn about their native music system through both formal training and from informal exposure. This knowledge influences music cognition in several ways, the formal and informal learning acting in conjunction. They argue that it is difficult to distinguish the innate from the learned factors in music perception and cognition. They point out however that it is possible that innate tendencies and biases need not limit the ability to appreciate or perceive music, because effects of learning and enculturation allow us to develop preferences and schemata that extend beyond initial predispositions.

Lines (2003), in his essay *Text and Context in Music*, discusses the debate about the sounds of the music (the text) and the cultural meaning (the context). He quotes the thoughts of ethnomusicologist

Mark Slobin to illustrate the way music is not a static phenomenon, that it is fleeting and illusive and very much situated in time:

We need to think of music as coming from many places and moving among many levels of today's societies, just as we have learned to think of groups and nations as volatile, mutable substances rather than as fixed units for instant analysis, yet at any moment, we can see music at work in rather specific ways, erecting temporary forcefields of desire, belonging, and, at times, transcendence. (p.162)

Lines speaks of the challenge facing music educators, the challenge to work within the "Understanding Music in Context" strand in the music curriculum. Using Heidegger's idea of "dwelling", he suggests the music educator needs to have an understanding of "what music *is* and where music *dwells*" (p.163). He posits that music dwells in many places, but by its acoustic qualities and because it cannot be seen, it is difficult to isolate at any given moment. Lines points out that traditionally music educators have been concerned with the practical aspects of music making while the context and particularity of music has been the focus of thinking in popular music. He reiterates the idea of music's acoustic qualities as being illusive, and, because we cannot see it, music can be difficult to isolate in an instance. He quotes ethnomusicologist Slobin (1996, p.1): "Music is both deeply rooted and transient. It dissolves into space while simultaneously settling into individual and collective memory."

Higgins (1991) points out that music means different things to different people, and that different understandings and experiences of music can lead to vastly different conclusions about what matters in music. He argues that there are assumptions made by followers of different traditions. He suggests that for those people who focus on the classics of either the Western or Indian traditions believe that

detachment is the appropriate stance of the listener. By contrast, for those people who think of rock'n'roll when they hear the word 'music' detachment would be a sign that the music is poor.

Higgins (1991) draws attention to the way music contributes to our understanding of the external world, that when we listen to music we do not locate it as occupying a specific distance from us. Our sense of hearing is unlike the senses of touch and sight, which are the primary means of establishing our relative distance from things. Hearing brings the environment to us. Musical hearing makes us aware of the world "as a place of encounter between what is within and what is outside us" (p.26).

Giroux (2000) reinforces this concept with his views on culture. He views culture as being the "site where identities are constructed, desires mobilized, and moral values shaped." He goes on to say that culture is the site where young people and others imagine their relationship to the world. He says that culture produces "narratives, metaphors and images for constructing and exercising a powerful pedagogical force over how people think of themselves and their relationship to others".

MacDonald, Hargreaves and Miell (2002) examine the way music is used to formulate and express identity. They argue that music is used to regulate moods and behaviours, and that it is a tool we use to regulate how we present ourselves to others in the way we prefer. They point out that musical tastes and preferences can form an important statement of our values and attitudes. They observe that the music people choose to listen to can be seen as an indicator not only of whom someone 'wants to be' but also of who they are. In their book, they define two concepts: identities in music and music in identities. In the former they examine the ways young people do or do not define themselves as musicians, composers, performers, improvisers, teachers and so on, and the role of school and family in influencing the young person's self-image with respect to music. With regard to the second

concept, they focus on how music is used as a means for developing other aspects of identity, such as gender, nationality, youth identity, and identity as a disabled person. They refer to the work of Merriam who ordered the variety of purposes which music is good for. His ordering is as follows: emotional expression, aesthetic enjoyment, entertainment, communication, symbolic representation, physical response, enforcing conformity to social norms, validation of social institutions and religious rituals, contribution to the continuity and stability of culture, preserving social integration.

Developing Listening Skills

A number of readings examine the ways listening behaviours evolve. Cook (1998) explores the nature of musical behaviour, whether people are either 'musical' or 'unmusical'. He examines the studies concerned with the development of formalized tests to provide scored ratings of comparative musical ability, the nature versus nurture debate regarding musical aptitude and the impact of favourable or not-so favourable contexts for musical development. Cook examines at some length the socio-cultural context and various influences. He draws attention to the growing body of research into early musical development. This work suggests that all children enter the world with a range of musical experiences and are capable of exhibiting a variety of musical behaviours; that they are predisposed to attend to melodic contour and rhythmic patterning of sound sequences, whether music or speech; that they begin life as musical beings, being responsive to the "musical primitives or universals that are the foundations of all styles of music". (Trehub, 2001, pp.11-12 as cited in Cook, 1998).

Willberg (2002) refers to the work of Gordon who has investigated the way children have learned to 'have songs in their heads'. He has developed this aspect of musical listening ability into a measure of musical ability. His studies led him to the conclusion that, by nine years of age, the ability to audiate

(hear melodies accurately in the head) has reached its fullest development and will not develop further. According to Gordon, scores attained by age five years can diminish if musical activity is not continued between the ages of five and nine years. He further suggests that from birth to five, children are in their optimum time for developing skills in listening to music. He goes on to say this skill may require more than enculturation in and out of school settings and a more purposeful approach to music education in the primary school years, from age five to age nine, to enable children to achieve their potential for music appreciation.

Serafine (1998) contends that music resides, not in some external form such as the score, the sounds, or even the sensation of the sounds, but in the world of cognitive constructs - a mental world of thoughts concerning sounds and their relationships. Her work shows that different age groups comprehend music quite differently. She tends towards the idea that music cognition develops as a person's cognitive understanding of the music increases. There is some suggestion that listeners who follow the lyrics of a song or the libretto of an opera are engaged in musically irrelevant behaviours. Her examination of the cognitive aspects of music is distanced from perceptual research in music as she indicates many of the studies in this area reduce music to unrealistic elements.

Hargreaves and Galton (1992) examine age-related artistic development, presenting a descriptive model of phases which they have labeled as presymbolic, figural, schematic, rule systems and metacognitive. They have assigned approximate age levels to each phase. The specific musical behaviours they have included are singing, musical representation, melodic perception, and musical composition. This last term includes improvisation and recording of original performances as well as traditional written compositions. They compare their model with the developmental stages described by Bruner and Piaget and the music development spiral model proposed by Swanwick and Tillman.

Each of the phases is discussed alongside the developmental level in visual art and written language skills. Listening comes through in the evidence from singing research, melodic perception research, and research involving the representation of rhythmic patterns.

Hargreaves (1986) discusses the various influences on children's musical ability, including the effects of practice and training, and the home and cultural environment. He points out the difficulties with drawing conclusions about the relationships between social class and musical development, indicating the cultural bias of the researchers. This recognition of researcher bias is relevant to this study for reasons discussed in Chapter 7.

In his theory of multiple intelligences, Gardner (1983) describes an intelligence as "an ability to fashion products or to solve problems, that are significant within one or more cultural settings". He cites seven different ways of thinking and suggests that we may "think of the various intelligences as sets of *know-how* procedures for doing things" (p.69). Music is one of the intelligences in Gardner's model. Gardner suggests that music can serve as a way of capturing feelings, knowledge about feelings or knowledge about the forms of feeling, communicating them from the performer to the attentive listener.

Armstrong (1999) expands on Gardner's theory, pointing out that individuals do not have to be professional musicians to think musically. He points out that most people use their musical minds in the course of everyday life. Being surrounded by music as it wakes, entertains, serenades, relaxes, and energises us throughout the day, as it plays an important part in celebrations and rites of passage, we cannot help but be influenced by what he terms "this informal music education" (p.63).

Armstrong goes on to give examples of the uses and effects of listening to music. The part of his writings that is most relevant to this study is the section on listening to music. He shares Copland's (1952) suggestions that there are three different levels to listening to music:

- The *sensuous* plane - listening for the sheer pleasure of the sounds emitted
- The *expressive* plane - paying attention to mood and meaning in a piece; for example distinguishing a serene work from an exuberant one; listening for the underlying message of the composer
- The *musical* plane – attending to the different components of musical structure: melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre or tone colour, and texture; also understanding musical form (being able to distinguish a sonata from a symphony, for example, or a rondo from a fugue).

Armstrong (1999) draws attention to the fact that Copland pointed out that an individual actually listens in all three ways simultaneously, but that becoming an educated listener requires a commitment to hear a great deal more in the music than previously, by listening *for* something in the music as apposed to listening *to* the music.

Armstrong gives twenty ways to develop musical intelligence, including: go to concerts or musicals; spend one hour each week listening to an unfamiliar style of music; take a course in music appreciation or music theory at a local college; read music criticism in newspapers and magazines; put on background music while studying, working, or eating, or at some other time during the day that is normally quiet; listen for naturally occurring melodies or rhythms in such phenomena as footsteps, bird song, and washing-machine noise; and make a list of all the music you hear in the course of a day, from Muzak in the supermarket to radio and tv music. While this list suggests ways to develop

musical intelligence, it also reflects the variety of contexts and aspects to music listening, as well as the complexities involved in how a listener experiences music.

Copland (1952) talks of the gifted listener. For him the gifted listener was primarily the non-musician. As a composer, he considered them a challenge as he thought he could be sure how a professional musician would react to his music:

But with the amateur it is different; one can never be sure how he will react. Nothing really tells him what he should be hearing, no treatise or chart or guide can ever sufficiently pull together the various strands of a complex piece of music - only the intruding floodlight of one's own imagination can do that. (p.8)

Copland (1952) regarded the freely imaginative mind as being at the core of music-making and listening and that there are two principal requisites for talented listening: first the ability to open oneself up to music experience; and secondly, the ability to evaluate critically that experience. He then takes this further: "The interesting question then is not whether he is deriving pleasure, but rather, whether he is understanding the import of the music. And if he has understood, then I must ask: *What* has he understood?" (p.11)

Copland suggests there are two approaches to gaining meaning from music: The first is the meaning from the music itself, because he considered that music had no extra-musical connotation. The second was meaning based on the idea that music is a language "without a dictionary, whose symbols are interpreted by the listener according to some unwritten Esperanto of the emotions" (p.15) The importance of the imagination to balance the combined impression made by melodies, rhythms, tone colours, harmonies, textures, dynamics, developments and contrasts is stressed by Copland as he

explains there is “no chronology of events, no momentary picture, nothing to “hang on to” in music” (p.15).

Psychology of listening to music

The next group of readings deals primarily with the ways people experience music and the processes involved.

Huron (2002) explores the psychology of listening to music. He works from the premise of music experiences being subjective, assuming we have a way to describe our experiences. He proposes twenty-one possible listening modes, indicating the list is not intended to be exhaustive. These modes include distracted listening, signal listening, emotional listening and kinesthetic listening. He gives a brief description of each, often showing how each mode relates to, over-laps with or leads to other modes. This is useful as a possible way to categorize responses to music by the participants in this study.

Hallam (2001) argues that music satisfies some important human needs, although no evolutionary or survival purpose has been identified. She states that music can be experienced in many different ways, pointing out that while listening to music appears to be a single activity it actually involves a range of processes: it can be undertaken from various points of view. Perhaps holistically with the listener deriving pleasure from the emotion arising from the music; perhaps used to change or intensify a mood or to make a boring task more pleasurable; perhaps it can be undertaken at an intellectual level, where the listener identifies the structure, harmony, timbre or dynamics of the music.

Jourdain (1997) examines the various aspects to listening to music. While not simplifying the complexity of how we perceive sound, he takes us through the discoveries from science, psychology, music theory, and philosophy in an effort to explain the way we connect with music. He makes the point that melodies constitute the basic unit of musical experience, and that for many music is melody, and that many people become engrossed in music only when they sing along. Jourdain argues that melody is the one kind of musical device that nearly anyone can make sense of and that nearly anyone can remember and reproduce. Melody listening usually means word listening, and that for most people, “music” is as much about poetry as about tonal sound. He suggests that it is for this reason that so little music crosses linguistic borders, and that words provide a welcome memory aid for the musically undeveloped mind. Pop music reinforces this by ensuring that words are intelligible by emphasizing consonant sounds. In contrast, art music emphasizes vowels, thereby emphasizing the overall harmonic strength of the piece. Audiences for art music don’t expect much from the words, and they “gladly listen to songs in languages they cannot understand” (p.257). Musical taste is described as an explanation and a justification for preferences, and that musical taste is complicated, as we are drawn to music for many reasons. He suggests taste begins with the listener’s notion of the role music should play in life, that for many people musical function outweighs all considerations of musical quality. He quotes folksinger Pete Seeger “The important thing is not, ‘Is it good music?’ [it’s]’What is the music good for?’”

Mood enhancement, experiencing meaning – the story music tells, social symbolism, dance, cult of personality, are some of the reasons he lists for musical choices. He explains that research appears to show most people acquire their musical taste during adolescence among friends of the same age and carry early preferences right through to the grave. It appears that this overrides considerations of individual neurology and personality, that once a way of listening is established it is applied to all

kinds of music, which are accepted or rejected by how well they fit. Jourdain suggests that as this appears to happen about the ages 10 – 12 that most people don't bother to accommodate a wider range of musical understanding, not because of the brains inability to branch out and form new connections but because it is easy to reject an uncomprehended genre by turning off the radio or by changing channels. He stresses that listening is a skill – a *performance* skill in which the listener inwardly reproduces many features of a piece by anticipating them, and thereby better prepares himself to perceive them. He describes a listener's "perfect performance" as a "matter of striking a balance among the many ways a piece can be attended to". (pp.264-265).

Bronte-Tinkew and Magill (2004) examine the development of "the Word and the Song". From birth, babies are programmed to perceive human voice sounds differently from other environmental sounds. Features of the human voice such as prosody (rhythm, pitch, tone and stress) as well as pauses (or rests) in addition to speech sounds seem to be of unique and special interest to infants across cultures. Whilst their primary concern in this paper is with children with autism and communication disorders, the literature cited supports the view that in general children with autism and communication disorders respond well in musical areas as compared to normal children.

Goddard describes why the human voice has appeal to the music listener:

When music is produced by the human voice, it ceases to be naked in associations, being enrobed by the manifold associations of humanity. It is this vast change from abstract sound to sound rich in human associations – from tones strange to tones familiar – which we feel as so striking and grateful when human voices break in on instrumental music. In vocal music, mystic features of musical sound have a human aspect. (Goddard, as cited in Langer, 1953, p.144)

Functions of music

Music is used in various ways. The following readings consider some of the ways music is used by adolescents and teenagers.

In Gembris (2002) we are presented with a possible list of functions of music in everyday life for adolescents. These include: the deliberate choices of one music over another for identification with a specific group; as a source of information on new lifestyles, fashions or behaviours; as a tool to provide separation for adults who reject youth-specific music; stimulation for dreams and wishes; establishing identity through the physical act of dance; summons to be active and protest; as an escape from everyday life; the possibility of being able to identify with idols such as rock stars; as a means of mood control.

Swanwick (1999) argues that music persists in all cultures and finds a role in educational systems not because it services other activities, not because it is a kind of sensuous pleasure, but because it is a symbolic form. It is a “mode of discourse as old as the human race, a medium in which ideas about ourselves and others are articulated in sonorous shapes” (p.2).

Roe (1999) examines the research which underpins the growing understanding of the place music has in the lives of young people in Europe. He points out that since at least the 1950s it has been evident that music plays a role in the process of identity construction of young people, not only personal identity but important aspects of cultural, ethnic, national and gender identity. He tells us that while young children both girls and boys appear to listen to similar quantities of music; it begins to change around the ages of 9 and 10. Girls increase their listening, with the increase becoming more marked around 11-12 years, continuing until 19-20 after which it falls off somewhat. By comparison,

listening among boys begins to increase markedly around 13–14 years continuing to 21–22 when it also falls off. Active interest in music follows a similar pattern. Females tend to be more interested than males from childhood through to the age of 19–20, when the reverse begins to occur. The greater interest of females has been found to be particularly marked around the ages of 9–12 years of age. Roe argues that historically girls have been less visible in youth culture while the males have been the performers, the females have been the consumers. Love and courtship have been dominant themes in popular music and they appeal to both sexes. He suggests this may explain the relationship girls have with pop music, why young girls dominate the ‘teenybopper’ record buying public and why the majority of pop artists have been male. Dancing is also relevant in this respect in early adolescence, which is a more extensive and popular activity among boys. He says that studies show that interest in pop and rock starts early. Children’s music is popular up to the age of six, by the age of four up to 60% are also interested in pop; and by the age of seven, 40% have pictures of music artists on the walls of their room. By the age of nine interest has moved almost totally to the teenage world of music and it is about this time that children distinguish their parents’ music preferences from their own. It appears the key time in the development of music tastes, the change from children’s music to pop and rock, occurs between the ages of seven and nine. At about the age of eight older siblings and friends start to exercise a greater influence over the development of musical preferences than do parents.

Roe (1999) makes the point that while we know that children listen to popular music in large numbers it does not tell us much about its importance in their lives, what they find attractive in it, what their motivations for use are, and what do they get from the music they listen to. He draws attention to the fact that while children are listening to music, they are “eavesdropping” on a world that is aimed

primarily at an older audience, and may fail to comprehend the lyrics heard. This reading relates strongly to this study and its findings.

White (2004) examines the place of music in youth culture. He lists some of the issues regarding youth music as being economic, market, and consumer issues; cultural preferences and social factors; ideology, dominance, and agendas related to music; youth culture and mass appeal; and moral panic and youth culture and music. He makes the point that often youth music is viewed as promoting anti-social behaviour and attitudes, and as a result many people feel it must be controlled or at least censored. He suggests that youth culture or kid culture has a language of both critique and possibility, that allows young people to locate themselves in history, find their own voices and establish what Friere and Giroux (1989) termed “the consideration and compassion necessary for democratic civic courage”

McDonnell (2000) examines the idea of pop culture and its place in modern society. She argues that children are not passive consumers of the products put before them. They are a critical audience, but not in the same way adults are. She argues that popular culture has become the repository of narrative, the place where the “idea of the ‘story’ still reigns supreme” (p.15). She says this strong grounding in the narrative exists because the children themselves demand it. They need the stories, as it is their main way of interacting with and making sense of the world in which they live. She points out that what disturbs adults is that the children listen to the stories, consume the stories, and are entertained by the stories. She also identifies gender differences. This is part of the development of group identity or solidarity, with girls interested in relationships, maintaining beauty and harmony, while the boys show more interest in things, machines, vehicles and grossness.

O'Toole (1997) reports the work of Roberts and Christenson who organized research into an overview for those concerned about the influences of pop music, and about the efforts to censor it. Overall they say music does not have massive negative effects, but that it does seem to be dangerous for some youth. They contend that most human learning takes place outside designated educational settings and is incidental in nature. They emphasise that in adolescent years pop music is more influential than television, movie and computers. Their list of uses for music by adolescents include altering and intensifying moods, furnishing slang, and providing ambience at social gatherings. They indicate that musical styles indicate social groups, facilitate friendships, help create a personal identity, and that the music personalities provide models for dress and behaviour. They contend that adolescence starts as early as ten years of age, and because biological rates are so variable, suggest that perhaps the easiest way to tell if a child has reached adolescence is to notice whether he or she has developed a passion for popular music. Their observations of the meanings children take from lyrics or music videos reflect the idea that meaning is not taken from the lyrics or the video but rather constructed. The children draw on knowledge they already have. They also make the point that adults think that all adolescent music is alike, not realizing there is a vast range and diversity in genres. They also emphasise the importance of music being 'for the body' (dancing) as much as it is 'for the ear' (listening).

Communicating ideas

Gee (2002) examines sociocultural approaches to language and literacy. He discusses how language functions in society. While he references cross-cultural issues in communities and schools, the theory of discourses has relevance as a possible explanation for the findings of the study. This study is about children using their own words and terms to describe what they are attending to in music and how it influences their preferences. They use their own language and their own understandings of what

various words and terms mean, while I interpret and make sense as an outsider. Gee's theory of language in a social context is particularly useful to this study as the participants talk about their preferences and responses in terms of narrative, function and relationships.

Most of these readings are concerned with musicality, while the findings of my study reveal the importance of music as a life issue, an entity with which the participants of the study have a real, ongoing relationship.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the approaches to my research study. In the first part I will explore the philosophical basis and methodological approaches of constructivism. I will then examine the case study as a method to carry out the research and detail the specific approaches I used to gather data. I will reflect on my position as researcher. In the final part I will describe the processes and techniques I utilized to analyse and interpret the data and how I reported it.

Methodology

This study is concerned with the thoughts and opinions of six Year Six children. It seeks to give an insight into the way children of this age experience various pieces of music, pieces of their own choosing and pieces chosen by me, the researcher. It attempts to describe the culture of a small group of students, and as such is an ethnographic study. According to Fetterman (1998) people act on their individual perceptions, with those actions having real consequences. Consequently, the subjective reality each individual sees is no less real than an objectively defined and measured reality.

I chose case study to examine this topic as it is an approach which shows the richness and diversity of participants. In this case it shows children actively constructing meaning around their experiences. It allows each individual in the study to have his or her place “centre stage” in the study (Ragin, 1992a, as cited in Neuman, 2000, p.148). It also allows for the interpretation of comments by the participants by the researcher to gain a clearer of their ideas. Neuman (2000) points out that qualitative researchers start with the point of view of the people being studied, and interpret the data by “giving them meaning, translating them or making them understandable” (p.148).

The philosophical approach to this study is constructivist. Constructivists are of the view that 'what we take to be objective knowledge and truth is the result of perspective. Knowledge and truth are created, not discovered by the mind' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p.236). Human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as they construct or make it. People invent models, concepts, and frameworks to make sense of experiences. These models, concepts and frameworks (constructions) are continually tested and modified in the light of new experiences. Constructivists endorse the claim that, "contrary to common-sense, there is no unique 'real world' that preexists and is independent of human mental activity and human symbolic language" (Bruner, 1986, as cited in Lincoln & Denzin, 1998, p.236).

Eisner (1991) refers to the inquirer as someone who "reconstructs or transforms his or her perceptions into some representational form that illuminates, interprets, and appraises the qualities that have been experienced" (p.86). He goes on to say that this usually takes the form of some kind of narrative, and that it is a significant re-presenting of the researcher's experience. It points to the importance of "an aesthetic (versus scientific or propositional) form of knowing in human inquiry" (p.53).

The social, dialogic nature of enquiry is central to constructivist thinking. Inquiry methodology also requires attention both to the inquirer's own self-reflective awareness of his or her own constructions and to the social construction of individual constructions. Guba and Lincoln, (1985, as cited in Lincoln & Denzin, 1998, p.242) believe constructivist philosophy is idealist, they assume that what is real is a construction in the minds of individuals. It is also pluralist and relativist: there are multiple, often conflicting constructions, and all have potential meaning. They also assume that the observer

cannot be separated from the people and behaviours they are observing, as they are part of the inquiry process. Findings or outcomes are considered constructions of the inquiry process.

Jerome Bruner (cited in Hansen, 2005) proposes a view of constructivist learning theory in which the teacher is aware of the structures and knowledge a student brings to a learning experience, and builds on those structures. In the music context, Elliot (1995) puts the view that when listening to music we don't hear it as it is, we hear the music as we are.

Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories of cognitive development are concerned with the qualitative changes in children's thinking. Piaget believed the child must actively construct knowledge and that learning activities should be matched to the developmental level of the child. The role of teachers is to help children learn how to learn. Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development places more emphasis on social interactions. He proposed that knowledge is not individually constructed but is co constructed between two people. He believed language to be the most important tool to influence children's cognitive development.

O'Neill and Green (2001) suggest there is a need for more case studies in music education research. While case studies have been a feature of research in education, they have been less prominent in the field of music education. O'Neill and Green argue that the subjective experiences of individuals represents all the complexity associated with being temporally embedded in a social world, and that understanding the impact of the full set of social experiences across the whole life of any particular individual cannot be captured through any method other than the exploration of individual subjective experience.

The strength of the case study is that it provides human interest, and tells the stories of human beings and their perceptions. It is particular in its focus; it provides a close look at a single aspect of life. An issue arising from this is generalization (Burns, 2000; Kvale, 1996). Who is responsible for the analytical generalization- the reader or the researcher? Kvale states "it is paramount that sufficient evidence is provided by the researcher for the analytic generalizations to be made" (p.234)" Burns (2000) points out that the study should provide "a rich description" (p.477) so readers can decide to what extent the study is applicable to their situation.

The potential limitations of a case study relate to researcher bias, generalization, time and information overload, reliability, validity and rigour (Burns, 2000). Researcher bias is of concern when selecting evidence to support or refute a position, or when choosing a particular explanation for the evidence found. The personal views of the investigator can influence the direction of the findings, and the conclusion. Bias can also enter into the way the study is conducted. "The opportunity to advance personal causes and views is strong, while external checks are weak" (Burns,2000, p.474). In this particular investigation I regularly discussed my findings with my supervisors and on two occasions presented study progress to Christchurch College of Education staff and student peers where their questions, comments and advice assisted in the explanations and directions I took in selecting material and themes during the analysis of my findings.

The second limitation of case studies is that they provide little evidence for scientific generalization. Burns (2000) points out that this is not their purpose. Case studies are focused on "circumstantial uniqueness and not on the obscurities of mass representation" (p.474). The case study aims at enabling the readers to decide how much the researcher's case relates to their own situation. It gives the reader the opportunity to make his or her own generalizations.

Time and information overload are problems relating to case studies. They are seen as time consuming, producing a large amount of information that is impossible to adequately analyse, this increasing the tendency to selectivity and bias. To keep time and information overload to a minimum I have deliberately kept this a small study with only six participants.

Reliability is more focused on dependability that the results make sense and are agreed on by all concerned, than they are with replicability. Ways of overcoming this is by reporting possible researcher bias, and ensuring there is an audit trail to authenticate how the data were obtained and decisions made about data and categories. Steps and procedures need to be explicit and well documented. I have endeavored to report the steps I took at each stage of the research process during this study and the growth of understanding in my role as a researcher.

Burns (2000) notes that many of the checks and balances of standardized and reliable instruments are missing from the case study method, stressing the importance of the researcher to give a detailed account of how they carried out the study. Validity of the case depends on the purposes to which it is put. In a case study, what is being observed is a participant's construction of reality, their understanding of the world. "What *seems* true may be more important than what *is* true" (p.476). In this study I investigated what is 'true' to the participants : I give detailed descriptions of instructions, settings and observed body language in an attempt to show the basis for the conclusions I drew from my findings.

Interviews

Interviews were the means of gathering data for this study. I set out to conduct guided conversations where the interviewer and the interviewee influenced each other (Kvale, 1996). The primary form of

interview used was the semi-structured life worldview interview. Kvale defines this as “an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (p.6). Kvale (1996) identifies seven stages in the process, ranging from thematizing the purpose of the interview, through to designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying and reporting the findings.

Each of the interviews lasted about an hour. These offered the participants a chance to respond to open-ended questions. I was guided in the formulation of these questions by the aim of getting as real a report of the children’s experiences of the music as possible, without using questions which would sway their thinking. I did not ask every question on the interview guide. All the interviews were digitally recorded, then down-loaded onto my personal computer. I transcribed the interviews myself after each interview. The transcripts were returned to the participants for review, clarification and any comments they cared to add.

Ethical issues

This study obtained clearance from the Christchurch College of education Ethics Committee before proceeding. This was made known to both the participants and their caregivers as part of the information material they received when I asked for their consent to take part in the study.

An important issue centred on the importance of informed consent as the participants of this study were children. It meant that parental/caregiver consent was required.

At the start of the study seven children indicated they would like to take part. Six of the children gained parental/caregiver consent, as well as giving their own. While the seventh child gave his own

consent his caregiver did not. I decided not to include him in the study, but it did raise some interesting issues which could be explored in another setting.

The participants were able to see the transcription of their interview within a week of each interview taking place. Each child was able to read the transcription and comment on what was there, ask questions, clarify what didn't make sense to them, help me clarify any problems that had occurred for me. This was an endeavour to ensure "a loyal written transcription of an interviewee's oral statements" (Kvale, 1996, p.111).

When seeking consent for the children to take part in the study I assured them I would make every effort to keep the recordings and transcripts in my own office and that access would be only available to me, and my supervisors as needed. I assured confidentiality also by the use of pseudonyms in the transcript of the interviews, the text of the thesis and in any discussions of the material gathered.

Having formed a relationship with the subjects over a period of two months, seeing them at least once a week over that time, having met family members and had social conversations with the children, it was important to mark the end of the data gathering. I did this with a letter and small token of thanks to the children, their class teacher and the principal and staff. I also presented the class with a small token of thanks for their helpfulness and interest.

Reporting

The findings from this study form the body of this thesis. The material being seen by my supervisors, and the markers and moderators of the paper. Aspects of this study may also be used in academic papers or presented at conferences. The participants are not identified by name. I have made every

effort to assure confidentiality and the anonymity of those participating by using pseudonyms in the text of the thesis and on the transcripts of the interviews.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are those which apply to a case study and have been identified earlier.

A small number of children were interviewed for this study. I have had difficulty locating case study research on children's responses to music they have chosen that would allow for comparisons. Moreover, by deliberately limiting the study to children who attended a decile five school, I am aware of missing the experiences, thoughts and opinions of children from wider socio-economic catchments.

A further source of limitation is researcher bias and the decisions I made to exclude evidence or choose a particular interpretation of what I had heard or seen. This is discussed in the following section.

Reflexivity and my position as researcher

Weber, Gouldner and Mannheim (cited in Neumann, 2000) questioned the idea of the researcher as neutral and value free, objective and unbiased, while Bogdan and Biklen (1998) point out that researcher objectivity does not exist and knowledge about the field may lead to better decisions in choosing what to include.

Holliday (2002) defines reflexivity as "dealing with the issues arising from the knowledge that much of what the researcher sees is a result of her own presence" (p.173). The following discussion attempts to describe my position as researcher and the effects of the research on me.

My background as a generalist primary teacher with specialist training in teaching music brought advantages and disadvantages. Some of the positives were having had recent experience teaching Year Six students and having taught music to all levels of children in primary schools. Another advantage was my familiarity with the primary school setting and this made for links with the school principal and staff where I chose to do my research. I think my teaching background and my work on a local music festival gave me more credibility with the principal and staff. The teaching skills I had made it possible for me to work with the children in the class with minimal disturbance to the routines during the trust-building phase of the study. Management skills meant that I could keep the group interview more or less under control when the participants lost focus. The children knew I was a teacher at another school. I also revealed the fact when I explained what I was researching and why. My teaching background gave me some credibility with the children I was working with, and their parents.

Disadvantages included my continually having to suppress the urge to 'teach' the participants during interviews. I wanted to supply the correct terminology for them, but had to keep the 'researcher' hat firmly in place and ask more questions for clarification, listen encouragingly, and let the child use their own words. I was researching children's thoughts and experiences and had to keep that firmly in mind at all times, not judging them, not putting my words in their mouths. For example: the imperative to keep this distance is emphasized by Holliday (2002) who says

The researcher needs to work hard to distance herself from and thus make scientific sense of the *mélange* of interaction in the culture of dealing in which she

herself is a major actor...she has to distance herself from her own prejudices and easy conclusions. (p.153)

Method

Selecting the Participants

The population for this study was six Year Six children. The children were self-selected by a combination of processes from one Year Five and Six composite - generalist class at a Decile 5 school, on the boundary of a major New Zealand city. I was not specifically looking for children who had special performance abilities in music.

I approached the school for the following reasons: 1) I knew the principal of the school from my work on the local schools' music festival; 2) he had recently completed a research project and would be aware of issues I would have to deal with while conducting research with children; 3) the children I wanted to work with would not be aware of me as 'the music teacher' and 4) it was close and convenient for me to get to for working with and interviewing the children. The Principal agreed to my request. He approached a class teacher who taught a Year Five/Six class, who was willing to participate in the early stages of the study.

I met with the class teacher and outlined the study. Together, we planned as to how I would be introduced to the whole class, before inviting the children to take part in the study. Establishing a relationship with the children was very important. I wanted to get responses that were not coloured by their having knowledge of my involvement with school choirs, orchestra and assembly singing, so when I first went into the classroom I was introduced as an adult who was there to help a group of children with reading and writing activities. I did this for four sessions for approximately an hour a

day. At the end of the fourth session, I spoke to the whole class. I told them I was interested in researching what children found interesting in the music they liked to listen to, and invited them to fill out the initial questionnaire. The questionnaire with Likert scale responses and open-ended questions was based on the attitudes and interests survey conducted by the National Educational Monitoring Project in 2000. At the end of the three questions, I asked if they would like to talk to me about the music they listened to.

I went through the surveys and selected children who had responded that they listened to music out of school time, that they liked listening to music lots out of school time, that they listened to music lots out of school time, and that they were interested in talking to me about the music they listened to.

The classroom teacher and I then went through the list together and selected seven children for the study. These children were selected because of their ability to communicate their ideas, and their likelihood of seeing the project through to completion. All the children selected had approached either the class teacher or me after completing the survey and had further expressed their interest in being interviewed. We selected four girls and three boys. While I had planned to interview six children, I was prepared to interview seven if the various permissions were gained.

I met with the seven children as a group and outlined the questions I would be asking them. The children asked questions, including: Can we talk about two songs we like? What about songs we really hate, can we talk about them? Will we still be allowed to do the study if our parents say "No?" Can we do the interviews at home or at school? What if we decide we want to pull out? I answered all of these questions and gave each of them a letter with the information about the study, which

answered all these questions in writing, so they could take it to read and discuss with their caregivers. Neuman (2000) emphasizes the importance of gaining informed consent:

It is not enough to get permission from the subjects; they need to know what they are being asked to participate in so that they can make an informed decision. Subjects can become aware of their rights and what they are getting involved in when they read and sign a statement giving *informed consent*, a written agreement to participate given by subjects after they learn something about the research procedure. (p. 96)

Information and consent forms went home for the caregivers with each of the seven children. The classroom teacher had expressed reservations about one of the boys, as she had had trouble in getting various forms back from his mother on previous occasions. Six of the children returned the permission forms by the end of the following week.

The children signed forms to say they understood what the study was about, that they could pull out at any time, that they would be able to see transcripts. I had given them as much information as I could, answered questions for them when they needed clarification, got clearances from the principal and the class teacher.

The study

I divided the study into three parts. The first was an individual interview with each of the children about the music they preferred (or hated). The second part was a group interview where the children shared their views expectations and experiences of four pieces “classical” music I had chosen. The

third session was a group interview where the children shared their ideas about what made a “good” piece of music.

The First Interview

In the first interview, I invited the children to talk about one or two favourite pieces of music. They were invited to share the music they wanted to talk about whether it was a tape, CD, DVD, a performance by themselves, or someone else. Each of the children chose to share a recording of the music they wanted to talk about. I provided a CD player. The children and their parents were given a choice of the interview being at school in school time or during a lunch hour, or at their homes after school or during the weekends, or at another venue of their choice. The principal and class teacher had given permission for the interviews to take place during school time if the parents approved. Five of the interviews were conducted at the school. One of those in an office, one in the staff room during class time and the other three in classrooms which were not in use at the time of the interviews. One of the interviews was at the child’s home, after school. We conducted the interview in the sitting room.

The interview was semi-structured, with open-ended questions, allowing the children to expand on their responses and emphasize what they deemed important. Questions included what is it about this music that makes it special for you. How does it stand out from other music? When did you first notice this music? What do you listen for in this music? How would you describe this music? If you had a question about this music, what would it be? Some of the children also shared music they did not like, with questions altered accordingly.

After the first set of interviews

I recorded each interview with a digital recorder, downloading it onto my computer. I then transcribed the interview. When I next saw the child asked them to read the transcription and make comments or corrections/ changes.

Kvale (1996) describes a transcript as a “hybrid between an oral discourse unfolding over time” and a “written text created for a general, distant, public” (p.182) He emphasizes the point that the interviewee’s statements are not collected, they are “co-authored by the interviewer” (p.183). This is reflecting the nature of research where the researcher is part of the data gathering process, and the skills, knowledge and ideas the researcher brings to the study are important in determining the emphases and direction of the study.

Each of the children responded to the transcript of their interview differently. Sarah went through the transcript correcting the grammatical errors, asking why I hadn’t corrected them when I wrote what she had said. She told me I should have made sure that what I wrote was done “properly” and not what she had said. Sophia corrected a term I had written. I could not hear it clearly on the recording of the interview, and so had not transcribed it accurately. She indicated the rest was correct and signed it. Barbara seemed surprised that I asked her to read through and check the transcript. She asked three times if she had “Really said that?” Chrissie took her transcript and spent about twenty minutes with it, about twice as long as the others. I asked her if everything was OK and she told me she was crossing out the ohs and ahs and bits that “weren’t right”. I explained that I wrote what she had said, in her own words. She wanted to know what the dots meant, and on hearing that they meant pauses or times she was quiet before answering a question, she told me I should have known that she didn’t want them because “that’s not how you write down what people are saying. What do pauses mean?” I

responded that in my experience it meant people were thinking carefully about what they wanted to say and not say the first thing that came into their minds. There was a silence and then she said that it was OK to leave the transcript as it was. She did not complete her “corrections”. Andrew read his transcript and congratulated me on doing a good job of reporting what he had said. David seemed to glance at his. I was not sure if he could read the transcript and said if he needed someone to go through it with him it was OK. He told me he trusted me, and he thought it was OK.

The Second Interview

The second interview was a group discussion about four pieces of music I had chosen. I made a CD for each child. On it was a recording of ‘Florin Dance’ by Mark Knopfler, ‘Dies Irae’ from Requiem by Mozart, Scherzo from Symphony No. 9 by Beethoven and ‘Dreaming’ – Opus 15 No.7 by Schumann. I asked the children to listen to each piece of music at least twice during the following week, before the group interview.

The interview took place at school in a classroom not being used at the time. The interview was conducted with five of the six participants. One child was ill and unable to take part. She told me what she wanted to say about each piece of music after the final group interview, two weeks later.

The Third Interview

This interview was a group interview, held at school in a classroom not being used at the time. During this interview, the children talked about their ideas of what made a piece of music good to listen to.

Analysis

I made copies of the transcripts and filed the originals. I initially used highlighter to mark ideas and key terms, one colour for each apparent theme. I then reprinted the transcripts, each one on a different colour paper and cut up the responses and arranged the strips into categories to see how they compared with the original sorting of themes and ideas. As I became more familiar with the material, I found there were various ways to group the material. Some of the responses belonged in more than one category. I created various concept maps grouping the material with different key words and headings, for example Dunn's (2005) characteristics of intuitive listening; Merriam's purposes which music is good for (cited in MacDonald, Hargreaves & Miell (2002); Gembris's (2002) possible list of functions of music in everyday life; an attempt to answer the questions raised by Roe (1999) – what is the importance of music in children's lives? What do they find attractive in music? What are their motivations for use of music? I also examined the musical terms used. I created a list using the main headings of musical responses and extra-musical responses. While there were two main categories of responses, they did not appear to have equal importance, as the number of extra-musical responses far outnumbered the musical responses.

I identified three themes as being central to the children's listening experiences: Responses, roles, and relationships.

Reporting

I decided that in reporting findings I would let the children's words speak for themselves as much as possible. I grouped themes within each interview. Some themes were particular to individuals, some to some or all the participants.

I have arranged the findings in three chapters in a narrative style. As I report what each participant said, I offer interpretations, and apparent directions and themes that emerge.

The next section of this thesis covers the findings of the study. The four chapters each deal with one aspect of the study. The first is the likes and dislikes in music. It is followed by a reflection on the findings of the first set of interview. The next chapter deals with the group interview where the participants share and discuss their responses to “classical” music. The final chapter in findings covers the interview where the participants discussed “good” and “bad” music. Leading on from the findings is the chapter on implications for the classroom music educator.

Chapter Four: Likes and Dislikes

Introduction

This chapter examines each of the children's reasons for liking or disliking self-selected pieces of music. I describe the instructions the children were given, the setting of the interviews, and describe the themes that emerged from this set of interviews. I also describe the children's responses to the transcripts of their interviews.

Preparation for the interview

For the first interview, the children were asked to share one or two pieces of music they preferred to listen to and one or two they preferred not to listen to. The interview was semi-structured using the questions in Appendix 1.

I was careful at all times before the interviews to refer to "the music" the participants preferred to listen to, never "the song" or "songs" they preferred to listen to. Each of the six participants shared or spoke about songs recorded by professional singers. Each child brought his or her own CD to the interview, except for Andrew who chose a radio station for his preferred music.

Sarah

Interview setting

Sarah was the first participant interviewed. We used an office in the school administration area during class-time. There were three interruptions when the phone rang and two from children seeking the person whose office it was. I was surprised at the lack of concern Sarah showed. She took these

interruptions in her stride and my concern for being interrupted seemed misplaced, or I underestimated her ability to cope with the interruptions.

Preferred song

The first piece of music she shared was 'Black Eyes, Blue Tears', by Shania Twain.

Her reasons for liking this song were primarily extra-musical: Shania Twain was her favourite singer, it reminded her of when she lived in the North Island, and that she listened to it to change her mood, or to relax:

"I listen to this song when I'm angry, to make me more relaxed."

"I like the music, so often I come more relaxed and I don't worry about anything else."

She also acknowledged that she listened to it at other times as it was a song she could listen to no matter how she was feeling and while she could listen to any song on the CD "this is one of my favourites".

Relationships

Sarah said that she was first made aware of the singer by her mother..." 'Cause my mum always liked her and as I've got older I've started caring about music. I started to like it as well." Her mother had given her the CD as a Christmas present "not this Christmas, I think it was last Christmas, like the Christmas before last". Sarah smiled when she referred to her mother. It was apparent that this shared link with her mother was significant.

Listening focus

When asked what she listened to or for while listening to the music, she stated that she listened to the words more than anything else. She describes the lyrics of “Black Eyes, Blue Tears” as “inspiring... it’s almost as if it’s advice”. She had no particular part of the song she preferred, as she liked “the choice of words she (Shania Twain) uses in the song. I just listen for all the words ‘cause they’re relaxing and calming”.

Sarah often referred to the importance of the lyrics and the importance of the words having “meaning”. When asked if the words were more important than the instruments in a song she responded “the instruments are important ‘cause they make a song sound good. If you use a harmonica when it would sound better with a trumpet or a piano, it’s important, but the words are really telling you something. The instruments are just making their song. If you just say them (the words) it’s not music, it’s talking”. She considered the instruments secondary to the words, they were necessary to make words into a song or music. She felt that Twain had used the right instruments for the Black Eyes, Blue Tears song as they “tuned in with the words”.

Sarah referred to the lyric sheet and insisted I have a copy of the lyrics so I could get “the meaning of the words”. She returned to this theme of the meaning of the words many times.

The chorus of a song was something Sarah listened for and to in a song. She considered the chorus “is more what the singer means in the song. If they choose a topic about, I don’t know, apples, then there’ll be something about apples in the chorus. It’s more the heart of the song”.

Genre

When asked to describe the music Sarah attempted to put it into a genre, but noted “music seems to be different for almost everybody”. She described it as a little bit rock music “but so nice and calming, and it’s so special”. Upon further questioning, Sarah revealed that she thought rock music wasn’t usually calming but this particular song was “... just rock music, but it’s calming for me at the same time. It’s still rock music though”. She thought this track was rock music but it didn’t have the same effect as other rock music. Sarah’s impressions of rock music being “not calming” are in accordance with the view of rock music promoting anti-social behaviour and attitudes (White, 2004).

Personal space

Sarah listened to this music in her own room, by herself because “it’s like my own space and I only listen to it when it’s like my special time just for me so it’s my own space, so it goes together”. This relationship between her room and listening to her music arose three times during this interview, so the personal, private aspects of the song preference and personal, private space and time were closely linked.

Sarah’s question about this music was to the singer/songwriter of the song. “Why did you choose this topic for a song?”

Singing along with the song was something she did only sometimes, as was dancing to the music. Dancing and singing to the song were not really important but they helped her to enjoy it more.

Disliked song

When we moved onto the song she didn't like, her body language completely changed. She became tense and fidgety; her mouth became tight and generally became uneasy. The song was 'If You Wanna Touch Her, Ask!' from the same Shania Twain album.

Lyrics

Again she stressed the 'meaning' of the song and the words. She felt "maybe the words are a little grown up for me" as a possible reason for disliking the song. She insisted I have a copy of the lyrics and pointed out that the chorus was what she didn't like as the rest of the song was "sort of OK". There was one word that bothered her in both the chorus and the title of the song. She expressed it this way: "I don't see that 'touch' is the word that she uses and it doesn't seem right". This referral to the lyric sheet reflected Sarah's sense of the importance of words and how they are used. It bothered her if she felt they were used incorrectly, inappropriately or in a way she could not understand.

This was, for me as interviewer, a very tense part of Sarah's interview. I got a sense of much being unsaid, but was not sure whether Sarah actually wanted to talk further about what seemed to be disturbing aspects of the song. I decided to move onto a safer aspect of the song, talking about the instrumentation where she visibly relaxed and instead of talking about the song she didn't like she referred back to 'Black Eyes, Blue Tears', thus avoiding any further reference to the song which upset her.

I made a conscious decision to change the topic as I had a sense of unease about the topic of the song lyrics and did not feel comfortable about the prospect of a disclosure from the interviewee. I was not

prepared for this to happen on any level and had not considered this as a possible outcome within the interviews.

This was the first interview for the study. The overall theme arising from this interview was that of a child working to make sense of music intended for an adult audience. She expected it to make sense. She expressed the idea that perhaps it would make sense if she were older.

Sophia

She had asked to be interviewed at her home after school. The interview was conducted in the sitting room of her family home, while her mother and sister were in the kitchen/dining area. Towards the end of the interview her father came home and we saw his arrival through a window.

Sophia shared 'Lonely' by Akon as the music she most preferred to listen to. She had first heard this song on the radio. She and her sister "did a heap of jobs and put together our pocket money" to buy 'NOW 18', a compilation CD featuring currently popular songs. This song was on the CD. Sophia admitted that her sister did not listen to the CD much as she liked country music.

Lyrics and Dancing

Sophia liked the beat of this particular song saying, "It's good to dance to". She liked to sing with the music. She linked listening with singing and dancing. "I like to listen to the words and then sing them. I can dance to them". She considered it important for a song to have a strong beat and music patterns so she could "decide if I step". She expressed the importance of knowing the words of the song in relation to dancing to the music. "I like to know the words. The words and the dance have to match. It's no good if I do a turn and the words are about falling down".

Knowing the words was an important aspect of listening apart from dancing as when she listened to the song “it’s like reading a story, there are pictures going on.” She indicated she had seen some of the video that was currently on the television but only the part that was used in the advertisement to promote the CD she and her sister had purchased. She indicated that seeing the “bits” of the video had not helped to create the story she got from the song. “I haven’t seen it all and I’ve got my own story from the song”. This reflects the findings of McDonnell (2000): “Popular culture has become the repository of narrative, the place where the idea of ‘story’ still reigns supreme” (p.15). She goes on to say “The major function that pop culture serves for kids is as entertainment, as story-telling – a seemingly inexhaustible supply of stories” (p.30).

The quality of the singer’s voice was important to Sophia. When asked how this particular song stood out from other music she heard on the radio she responded that the singer had “a gentle voice and it doesn’t have heavy metal in it”. She further expanded on the voice quality theme by pointing out there were three different voices in the song. There was “Akon’s singing voice, some voices going OOOOO and the computer generated voice”. She said she liked the way they had been put together; they were “original and with the computery voices it kind of stands out from other songs”. She liked the way the voices had been “put together”. When listening to the music she sometimes got confused when trying to listen to just one voice, but enjoyed the challenge of trying all the same.

Discussion

Sophia’s use of the word ‘voice’ did not always make sense to me at the time of the interview. While transcribing I tried to see if I had missed a clue while she was speaking; however, I was still unhappy about my understanding of what she had said. It was not until the third interview that I noticed she

used the term 'voice' and used a gesture which made me realise she was referring to the melody of each section. This reflects the research which shows listeners often do not have the words for what they are experiencing as they listen to music (Dunn, 2005; Swanwick, 1994; Small, 1998).

Listening times

Sophia listened to this music in the morning as often as she could. Dad sometimes turned it on in the morning to get her out of bed. She listened in her room "or in the lounge, or just any time I can". She felt she listened to it a lot. Even though she and her sister had jointly bought the CD her sister "didn't really listen to it a lot. She likes country music".

Sophia said that listening to the song as often as she did was not boring. The song did not get less interesting with the repetition, but she expected it would "get boring eventually". This had happened before with other songs, so she then moved on to another song.

Listening focus and mood

She did not listen for or to any particular element within the music as it played, but like Sarah, Sophia used music to alter her moods. "It (the music) kinda makes me calm so if I'm angry I'll go and listen to it. I'm looking for something that will calm me down. I don't want to get in massive fights with my sister or mum or dad. It's a good way to take my mind off something that's making me upset". In this case she is using music not only as a calming agent but as a way to escape from situations that upset her, and to maintain relationships with the rest of her family.

The focus on the artist

Sophia's question about the music was: why did you choose to put all three voices, not just one? Or maybe; what were you thinking when you wrote this song? This is similar to Sarah's question, with both relating to the story behind the song. This theme of the story behind the music or song came through in both interviews. To reinforce this point, she told of how she had found out about Akon and that this had "helped to understand the song". She had found out about him in magazines, on the news (television) and the radio. She felt that knowing about the performer helped her to understand better what a song is about and it helps with knowing the song.

Instrumentation

Sophia's ideas about instruments were expressed in response to a specific question. She thought the instruments in this song were all "computers", and felt that the computer sounds with the voices worked "quite good", but "in the end you still gotta back it up with, you've got to get back to guitars, ukuleles and things like that." She thought that music would sound better with real instruments, predicting that "maybe in twenty years time all the music will be computerized and nothing will really be original". On further questioning she revealed that she thought computer music cannot be truly original. But also pointed out that the computer voices in the Akon song were what made the song interesting and gave the "stand out from the crowd", a quality that she liked, and found interesting.

Disliked song

Sophia's body language changed quite markedly when we moved onto the song she really didn't like. She became restless and fidgety and got up and moved around the room a couple of times. I got a sense of her working hard to resist turning the music off while it was playing. The song was 'Bye Bye, Love'. She first stated that the song was kind of old and "If you play it really loud it wouldn't

affect you. It gets boring; it doesn't make you want to listen more. It's kind of a one-off type of song". When I asked for her to clarify what she meant by a "one-off type of a song", she explained that it was a song "you can only listen to once and you've heard it all. It doesn't make you want to listen more. You could hear it for maybe a week and then it's gone, it wouldn't last long". She went on to say that this song 'Doesn't have different voices in it. This she compared to 'Lonely' which "has got different voices, it gets confusing listening but it's interesting and the computer instrument sounds are interesting". She said the different voices kept you "thinking and listening". She described this song as being boring and not making her want to dance.

Summary

Sophia made several references to musical elements of the music she preferred or disliked. She referred to the beat, the 'voice' (the meaning of which was referring to both the vocal quality of the performers and the melody of the song), and the texture of the music. She preferred music that was complex and offered three melodies to follow. She did not have the vocabulary to describe her thought clearly and unambiguously, which lead to some confusion for me as a researcher.

Barbara

This interview was carried out at school, during class time in a classroom where the children had gone to technology at another school.

Preferred songs

Barbara had two songs by the same artist that were her preferred listening at the time of her first interview. The first song was 'I Won't' by Akon. She liked the beat of it and the way that "when you sit down you can just imagine anything you want to." As she shared the music with me she seemed

unaware that she was moving as though she wanted to get up and dance. When I asked her if she danced to the music she said she did not actually dance: "I just feel like dancing". She continued with the whole body response to the beat of the music.

Relationships

Barbara used this song to reflect her mood. This particular song was used when she was "in a grump with Mum". She did not appear to use the music to change her mood or to escape from what was happening around her.

Barbara first heard this song when she was "flicking through the Akon CD 'cause Mum got it and it kind of made me feel like I wanted to dance". Mum had bought the CD "because it was the latest thing out at that time." Barbara just listened to it and found she liked this song and the one after. When she first listened to the song she liked to sit and listen but as time went by she wanted to dance and move to the song. She felt this was an important change to the way she had responded to the song over time.

Barbara mentioned the chorus as a feature of the song she looked forward to when listening. She liked the way the words were set out and felt the singer sounded better in the chorus. She sang along with the chorus and did so during the interview when she played the song for me.

Describing the music seemed difficult for Barbara. Early in the interview she said she listened to some "really cool music, hip-hop and stuff". She was not sure if this song fitted the hip-hop genre saying it did "in a way" because of the beat and you could "dance to it like a hip-hop beat", but did

not have any other reason for classifying it as such. This song stood out from others because it was “quieter and nicer to listen” to and she liked it better than the stuff she normally liked.

Instruments

When asked about the instruments Akon had used in the song Barbara admitted to not knowing what he uses. “I don’t know if he uses any or if it’s off the computer”. She was not bothered about not knowing and admitted she was not interested in what instruments might have been used. However, she did think that if Akon sang this without instruments it would “probably sound really weird, really funny”, and that it would not work as well as it did because there “might not be beats. Beat’s the thing that makes it like a song. There might be a beat without instruments but it wouldn’t be as good, but it might sound alright”. She thought that instruments helped the singer’s voice when he was singing, as “if it was just him singing by himself people would get a little bored but when you’ve got the beat it makes you get up and dance and think this is a real cool song”.

Like the previous two interviewees she listened to this music by herself in her room as she did her “own thing.” She indicated that this song made her feel happy and sad at the same time but could not be specific about how the music did this beyond saying that it was “the words and the way he sings it”.

She liked to play the songs she likes “over and over” to the point where Mum asks her to change the songs because she’s heard enough of them. She described herself as listening to it “all the time. When I get out of the shower and get changed I turn it on; when I get up in the morning I turn it on. I listen to it as much as I can.”

The second song was quite different in style. As she played 'Belly Dancer' this through the first time she smiled openly. She said that when she first heard it, it made her laugh, and that she still laughed when she heard it. She said she liked the way he sang the song, "It's just the way he sings it, it's full on". She described it as different to the other song. The first song was really sad and this one was full on and everything and that she just "felt the need to like it." It stood out from other music because it was real "beaty". This term was used several times during this part of the interview. It seemed to cover the rhythm of the melody, the quality of the lead singer's voice and the driving beat of the song.

Sometimes she played this song over and over until her mother told her to play another, as her mother got annoyed with the repeated playings. Other times she played this when she was in a happy mood. This was a song she shared with her friends, as well as when she was by herself.

Chorus

In this song she liked the chorus as well as a section where a group of male voices sing. She pointed out that the "bit that is like a chorus is done at the start as well". She pointed out this was not the normal form as the chorus is not usually sung at the beginning of a song. This difference from her experience and expectations made this more interesting. She spoke of the back-up singers and the men's voices as well as that of the lead singer. She thought there was "a lot happening" in the music. She said it was "like he's in the jungle or something. I sometimes imagine him in the jungle. I don't know why. Or I can imagine myself in the jungle".

This is another example of the listener making up their own interpretation of a piece of music, drawing on their own experiences and knowledge to make sense of what they are listening to. Barbara had not seen the video that went with this song. But had her "own video running in my head when I

hear it. Sort of like the instruments and I imagine the drums...jungle drums". She had intended to download the video for it but had not had time. She had seen only glimpses of it, not the whole thing.

She described this music as "Real cool and beaty". Again the term seemed to have multiple meanings referring to the beat of the song, the complexity of the rhythms, the way the different voices were arranged. She said the instruments were important in some parts of the song but did not indicate what they were or why. The voice quality of the lead singer, the female voice group and the male voice group were features she attended to along with the drums.

Disliked song

Barbara, in making her point about the singer being able to sing "different songs, like sad songs and full-on songs and lonely songs" unlike "other singers who sing the same songs" revealed that she really did not like the song "Lonely" that Sophia had chosen as the song she most preferred. Barbara did not like the "chipmunk" sound in the song. When the sound came on the radio or CD she turned it off or went to another song. She was not prepared to sit through the song and wait for the next one. She found she could not tolerate the sound at all. She felt "It's kind of babyish with the chipmunk voice. If the chipmunk voice wasn't there I would probably listen to it. The rest of the song is OK".

Her dislike of the song was not instant upon first hearing it: "When I first heard it I thought, 'Yeah, that's alright'. Then I heard it a couple of times over and over again and I thought, 'That's not right,' and I didn't like it".

Chrissie

This interview was carried out at school, during class time in a classroom where the children had gone to technology at another school.

Chrissie had two songs she preferred to listen to; 'In Your Eyes' sung by Kylie Minogue and 'Just like a Pill' sung by Pink. The first song we discussed was 'In Your Eyes'.

Discussion

As she shared the music at the start of the interview, Chrissie hummed some parts, sang others and all the while her feet were moving from side to side in time with the beat. I very much had the sense that she had gone into herself as she listened to the music, she was totally involved in listening to the song, and I waited until it had completely finished before starting the speaking part of the interview, not wanting to interrupt the experience Chrissie was involved in. The other participants had voluntarily disrupted the music to get on with the interviews, so this was quite a departure from previous interviews.

Chrissie felt that Kylie was a "really good singer" because she made her "want to dance to her music". When asked what made her a good singer, Chrissie responded with "She doesn't have a quavery voice like some people do". Upon further investigation I found she had invented the word 'quavery' to describe voices with an exaggerated operatic sound. Chrissie demonstrated the sound she meant. It was verging on a caricature of the soprano voice, with 'posh' sounding vowels. She stated her preference for this song in terms of what it wasn't and what it didn't have and what the singer didn't do, what qualities the singer's voice didn't have as opposed to what qualities her singing or the song had. Several times she referred to the "good tone in her voice" reiterating that she didn't make

the song sound horrible. In summing up she said that she liked the “quality of her voice, I really enjoy it”.

Unlike the other three participants, Chrissie listened to her favourite music with others – her mum, friends, sister and family. Somehow, it seemed that this was at odds with what I had witnessed at the start of the interview, where it was so obviously a private experience for her. I had felt as though I was privileged to witness such involvement in a song. She was very positive and smiled when she said that she shared it with others, and she thought that they all “enjoyed this music, too”.

This song first caught her attention in an unusual setting. She was at Smiths City with her mum and her brother and “there was this karaoke machine in there. Then I clicked on one of the songs and it happened to be that one that we heard and I enjoyed it”. She had not heard the song before that encounter. Her face lit up as she recounted this story.

She had got a CD of the song and said she put it on repeat so she could hear it over and over, as often as possible, every day. Every time she listened she sang, danced and sang along with the music. If she could not get up and dance, she would sit in one place and move her feet from side to side. She demonstrated the movement, with her feet together and parallel, the toes in one place and her heels moving from side to side.

Listening focus

When asked what she listened for in the music as it was playing she said “I normally look for a good tone of voice that doesn’t really go aaaaaaah” (here she demonstrated singing in the exaggerated operatic style she had used previously) She thought that the words of this song stayed on one topic.

This was, for her, an important feature of a good song: “I don’t really like words that don’t suit each other. If they’re singing about one thing and then it goes onto another, then it doesn’t really sound right”.

Instrumentation

When asked about the instrumentation in the song she said “I like electric guitars, I like guitars, I like piano, I like lots of instruments. I don’t know what the instruments are in this song, but I know they suit the song”.

Genre

She indicated that the beat in this song was “really good”. Going beyond this I found she used the term hip-hop interchangeably with fast music. The song ‘In Your Eyes’ was “Sort of in the middle, it’s not hip-hop but it’s not too slow either”.

Personal space

She listened to this song mainly at home, but also other places, but “not in shops”. “Sometimes I take my CD player with me; I listen to it on Mum’s bus. Sometimes I listen to it in the car”.

Her question about this piece of music was to the singer: How did you get your voice so good? This question reflects an interest in the vocal quality of the singer, reinforcing Chrissie’s preference for the vocal quality of the singer and wanting to know the story behind the voice.

Voices and Instrumentation

As she played the second song 'Just like a Pill' by Pink, Chrissie again hummed and moved her feet in the side to side movement seen as the previous song had played. In this song she said the different kinds of voices made it special for her: "I like in the middle when a boy's voice comes in and it joins in singing". She stressed that "Good voices" were what she listened for in a piece of music. She said that she liked the choice of instruments, too. "I like the choice of instruments, I couldn't tell which ones they were, but I think that they used a guitar, no, not guitar, an electric guitar". This was the first interview where a participant mentioned instrumentation of a song without prompting by me. She went on to say that, she didn't like the part where they swear, but she liked the "fact that it rhymes in some places".

Genre

Chrissie talked about the style of music, describing it as having "a little bit of Hip-hop in it".

Listening focus

She liked the beat, because she could dance to it She felt she now knew more about the music because "when I was little I couldn't recognize the words and I sung the wrong words, but now I can hear them more clearly, I've listened to it so many times". She compared the voices of the two singers whose songs she had chosen, saying they both had strong voices: Pink has "an excellent voice, it's not soft" while Kylie has a strong voice but it's "a different voice and she sings sort of soft songs".

Instrumentation

As with the previous song she spoke of the instruments as suiting Pink's voice and the song. She went on to say they "make her (Pink's) voice sound good". Without the instruments she thought the song would sound "bare." She felt it would still sound good but "instruments make it sound better".

She sometimes listened to each song over and over and sometimes alternated the two. Since they were on the same CD, she sometimes just put the CD on and listened to the tracks in order. The problem with listening to the songs in order was that the song she disliked most was between the two she liked. This led us into talking about the song she did not like.

Disliked song

Chrissie did not like the 'Dirrty' by Christina Aguilera. The thing she disliked most was "the words. I don't like the name they called it; 'Dirrty' 'cause calling someone dirty is a bit dirty!" She spoke this quite forcefully, her facial expression grim and tight-lipped. She felt the song was "not my taste" before she heard the song, based on the title alone. After hearing the song she decided she did not like it. She added "you can't hear the words clearly enough to sing along with it". When asked what made this song so bad compared to other songs Chrissie responded, "I don't like this music as much as I like other kinds of music." When I asked her what kind of music this was, she responded, "One that I don't like".

Her question about the music was directed to Christina Aguilera: Why did you choose to make it with those type of words? She reiterated her thoughts on the lyrics at this point saying, "It's not right. It's like the rude type of dirty. I really don't like that." She added that she would rather have songs that are about something that is polite and cheerful. This concern with the moral aspect of lyrics reflects

the concerns that Sarah had about the song she disliked; 'If You Wanna Touch Her, Ask.' Was Chrissie's dislike of the song because of the term 'dirty' being used in a rude way, or because she couldn't really hear the words clearly enough to sing it and couldn't make a meaning from the song that worked for her? Her body language throughout this section of the interview was tense, tight-lipped and defensive, with her arms folded, feet and legs firmly planted on the floor, quite the antithesis of what she had displayed when talking about the other two songs. Talking about this song was obviously difficult for Chrissie; the song was intensely disliked and she did not seem to have the words or language to explain her reasons. It reinforced the idea of lyrics being the primary focus for listening, and their importance when a listener is trying to make meaning from or give meaning to the song. Is this a case of what Sarah referred to as the song being a "little too grown up".

Andrew

This interview was carried out at school, during class time in a classroom where the children had gone to technology at another school.

Andrew approached this interview quite differently to the other participants. The day before the interview, I had given him a verbal message reminding him of our impending interview and if he had a CD, tape, DVD or whatever he was going to share, to remember to bring it. He said he was organized and asked if I was bringing the player I had used with the other kids. I assured him I was and he said that was good and he'd see me the next day.

I met him at his classroom and as we walked to the classroom where we were conducting the interview, I asked if he had his music with him. He said he did. I was puzzled, as I could not see any signs of CDs or tapes. When we got to the room he took the radio/CD player, plugged it in, and

announced that his favourite music to listen to was 'The Edge' – a radio station. I was not prepared for this. I had to re-think the questions I had prepared for the interviews. During my preparation for this study I had not considered the possibility of a participant choosing a radio station. I had considered videos, CDs, DVDs, tapes, the participants playing an instrument or singing, maybe a family member or friend singing or playing an instrument, but NOT a radio station.

Radio

Andrew said he preferred listening to the radio "because you can listen to different songs instead of one guy singing all the songs, the same sound, and you've got different people singing different tunes". He said that some songs stood out more than others did, and some singers stood out more than others did but "you can't name all of them because all of them are pretty cool".

Memories

When asked to tell me more about what he particularly listened for in the cool music he responded, "some of the old songs, like they were new, but now they're old". He added that these particular songs were maybe a year old, "maybe even two years old". He liked them because "It brings you back, like when you were two years younger and it takes you back another two years when you used to be singing to the song". Later in the interview he referred to the older songs as reminding him of good times, like when he was a "little kid".

Singing

He spoke at length on the importance of being able to sing along in his head, and the process by which he learned the words to a song so he could "listen to it in my head". He described it like this: "When it (a song) comes out you have no idea what the song is and then when it keeps coming on you

get to know bits and bits and bits and then by the end of the term you know all of the song". He used his hands to indicate a building process. Sometimes he did not want to sing "in his head" but wanted to "sing out loud with the music". He said he danced to music "once in a while" but said that dancing was not important, explaining, "Usually I'm a singer, not a dancer".

Words and Music

Andrew made a distinction between words and music. At first he said that the whole sound of a song was important as he listened to a song, "it (the whole sound) makes it round, like the words combine into it, so it sounds even better with the sounds coming on the back of it and the words in front like mixed together". He used his hands to demonstrate the position of the two different aspects of the music to which he was referring. I asked him to tell me a bit more about the "sounds in the back" and he explained it as "the music in the back that makes the voice stand out". He further clarified the difference as the singer singing, and music as sounds without words or voices. He also explained that it was possible to know a song without the words, or if you didn't listen to the singer you would still know the song "'cause you've heard it before. You just know the words if you close your eyes and just listen. You can see the actions like they have on TV". He thought it was "pretty cool" when he could hear a song on the radio, sing it in his head instead of singing it out loud when he really wanted to go to sleep and the songs made him want to go to sleep because he was so used to them. He described the songs that had this effect as "soft and cuddly". He liked these "soft and cuddly" songs at night when he really wanted to go to sleep. He further elaborated on the mood enhancing uses of music when he described some songs as "really alive and all at ya". These songs were the ones he wanted to hear when he came home from school in the afternoon "when you want to listen to loud music in your bedroom".

While he had preferences for different music at different times and purposes, he insisted on liking the radio because the songs were mixed. The mix of “old stuff and sometimes the new stuff”.

He did have some CDs but stressed that they were compilations because he liked the “mixed songs instead of one whole track of the same person”. In his usage of the term ‘track’ during this interview, he meant album, as he made the same reference on four occasions. He said he went back and listened to older CDs as well as the more recent ones he had bought or been given.

Anticipation

When asked how he felt about the idea that when he listened to the radio all the songs had been chosen by someone else he responded “I don’t really mind ‘cause all the songs that are on the radio, even the new ones that are out, some of the songs I don’t like and some of the songs I do”. Upon further questioning, he revealed that sometimes he got annoyed “in the middle of the day” when he wanted to “listen to something really cool and then the song comes on and it’s soft and not pretty loud then you’re like ooh! Man!” He did not get annoyed enough to go and listen to his CDs because “it’ll pass and another song will come on”. He seemed to enjoy anticipating a favourite song. He particularly liked it when a song was announced and then there was a commercial break because he could “get excited and really look forward to it”.

He listened to the radio in a variety of settings; in the car on the way to rugby practice or a game, sometimes in the mornings before school, Sundays in the morning, but the main time for listening to the radio was at night. He said he listened quite a lot “‘cause every time I go to bed, I hop into bed about 7.30 and listen ‘til about 8.30”.

Towards the end of the interview, Andrew turned on the radio and listened to a song playing for about 20 seconds then announced that it was “a sort of slow song that was good if you wanted to go to sleep.” He further described the song as “not very loud, not really beating”. He went on to say that sometimes he would just listen and sometimes he would sing along. He said he probably knew “half the song and not know the other half”. To get to know the song he said the words, and when they came up “You say the words and then the songs that are worth it, you just keep practicing them”.

He talked about the change that took place as he had repeated listening to a song. “I like all songs. It takes a while. At first, you don’t like them but you just keep listening to them. Like, the first time you listen to them they sound a bit geeky, then keep listening to them and they sound pretty cool”.

In response to the question, ‘Do you ever listen to music that doesn’t have a singer?’ He responded that he didn’t have any CDs “that has stuff like that. If I did, I’d make up more words for it”. Andrew used the term ‘plain song’ to describe instrumental music; “sometimes if you have a plain song sometimes you can make up words, that’s something I’ve done, but I like songs with words.” He used the word song to describe both songs and instrumental music.

Andrew showed he did have preferences, even though he said he did not. He expressed some frustration with songs played on the radio not matching his mood. He showed a preference for songs, excluding instrumental music. His way of making sense of instrumental music was to make up words for it. Like Sarah, Sophia, Barbara and Chris, he considered words an important feature of the music to which he listened. If there were no words, he made them up. He used the music to enhance or reflect his mood, and was prepared to wait for music to come onto the radio so this could happen. He did not use musical reasons or descriptions of his listening preferences or experiences.

David

This interview was carried out at school, during class time in a classroom when the children had gone to technology at another school.

Preferred songs

David shared two songs to which he preferred to listen. He did not have a song he disliked. The two songs he shared were "Confession" by Usher and "Ride Up" by Die Hamo.

Voice quality

The first piece of music we spoke about was "Confession". David described Usher as being "a good singer" and that was his reason for liking this particular song. He liked the way Usher sang about "life and all that, about having his first child". He also commented on the "kids singing at the end" and how he specifically listened for that part. David felt Usher had written the song and that he was the only one who could sing the song because "It's his song, it's about him". A little later he conceded, "Someone else could, if they listened to it all the time" but they "would not sing it as well as he (Usher) did". He felt that Ushers voice stood out from other singers because it was louder than singers of other songs were, and that was why it stood out.

He did not sing along with this recording, he did not dance to it nor share it with anyone, he said he liked to "lie down in bed and listen to it". He said he did not get any images in his head as he listened.

Beat

When asked if he noticed anything about instruments in the song he said he noticed the beat, and then played the music and indicated the beat by snapping his fingers and tapping his feet.

Information

His question about the song was, 'Is this song true?' He went on to explain that he thought it was true, that it really was about Usher becoming a father for the first time. He wondered what it would be like to be a father himself. He seemed to be using the song as a source of guidance and information about growing up.

The second song David preferred to listen to was "Ride Up" by Die Hamo. David liked that the song was all about cars and was quite animated when talking about the song. He spoke at some length about Die Hamo's cars, about his racing and how good he was as a drag racer. David said that when he was listening to this song he pretended to drive a car. He showed me how his foot moved as though it was pressing an accelerator, how he changed gear with his left hand and used the playstation control as a steering wheel. He said "it's like driving a real car. My sister comes in and laughs at me". He listened for the sound of cars in the background and the "real cool beat". He described the music as "real cool and sometimes funny". He clarified what he meant by funny by recounting a part of the song where one of the performers says "You're a liar" and Die Hamo responds "That maybe". He said it was like a "couple of guys talking and joking around.". He liked the way they made fun of a television presenter in the same joking way.

Music Videos and C4

He said he watched C4, the music television channel, and that he spent a lot of time doing so. He said he had seen the videos for each of the two songs he had chosen "at least five times each". He had a CD with the songs on and had listened to them "a whole lot as well". He said that the video helped him to get to know the song and the artist "better" and went on to say, "If I lost the CD I could just go

onto C4 and text in a message to choose a song. I could just type in Die Hamo and describe the song and say it's about cars and it comes up about five songs after that". He had requested songs a "few times" and had them played. He explained that he requested songs by Usher but sometimes there were problems with the CDs. Some of his CDs "can be scratched because they've been used so much". He changed the topic and explained how the name of the person who had requested the song came up "at the bottom." He said he had had his name "on the bottom" (of the screen) a few times. He usually watched the music channel with his mum and she let him put in text requests.

David seemed to rely solely on what he had seen on the videos. He related closely to the 'story' in the videos. At times during this interview I got a sense that he was not really sure what he had seen on the video and it seemed he may have filled in 'gaps' when recalling what he had seen. So, maybe he was creating his own story from the song and the recalled pieces of the commercial videos.

David was the only participant who regularly shared the music he listened to with others; his mother featured strongly. His sister and brother were referred to as was his friend from school.

Gaps – the emerging themes

From this first set of interviews, the two major themes of this study emerged. The first one related to the children and the gap between their understandings of the songs and their life experiences, which would have allowed them greater understanding of both music and lyrics. These children, whose ages ranged from ten and a half to eleven and a half, were sharing their responses and reactions to music that had been written and performed for an adult audience. They expected to understand the lyrics of the songs they heard. When they didn't, they would either express dislike for the song or construct their own meanings and understandings, giving the song a message or theme they could relate to. The children did not appear to have the vocabulary to describe what they heard in the music. They would

make up words (beaty, quovery, plain music) to describe what was happening, or they would use a music word in different ways, thus giving it multiple meanings. For example the word 'voice' seemed to mean melody and vocal quality. Meanings of the same words also varied between individuals.

The second theme emerging from this set of interviews is the realization that while I am investigating children's thoughts and reactions I am also investigating my own expectations and ways of behaving as a teacher and so-called expert in music teaching. I had approached these interviews with the idea that I was open to what the children had to say, but found on many occasions that I wanted to teach them the music terms and correct their apparent misunderstandings. The gap between researcher and teacher was difficult for me to maintain. The habits of asking questions to lead children in a certain direction with the ultimate goal of increasing awareness and knowledge acquisition as opposed to questioning to uncover existing understandings were difficult to control. I constantly reminded myself that I was in research mode. In a sense, I was consciously observing my responses and reactions. At times, this need impeded the flow of the interviews.

Chapter Five: Reflection on the first interviews

This chapter examines the themes which emerge from the interviews about the subjects' preferred music. The themes are wide ranging, but fall into two main categories: musical and extra-musical. These can be placed within the context of songs.

Songs

I had carefully used the terms 'music' and 'pieces of music' when describing what I was investigating during the lead up to the interviews. All six children chose songs for their preferred listening. Even Andrew who chose the radio as his preferred listening referred to songs and singers during the interview. Instrumental music did not feature, even with Sophia whose grandparents, who lived with her family, played the accordion, and she herself had started to learn the guitar. Jourdain (1997) says "For most people, 'music' is as much about poetry as about tonal sound. Studies show that untrained listeners usually can't recall melodies without bringing lyrics to mind, yet can readily recognize lyrics apart from their melodies" (p. 256).

Two ideas arise from this preference for songs: firstly, that of the voice itself and its 'humanness', and secondly the lyrics within the song. These two ideas dominate the responses during this part of the study.

Musical

Vocal quality

All of the participants spoke about the importance of the voice, using different terminology, such as "the sound of his voice", "the quality of his voice", "a good tone in her voice", "he has a louder voice

than other singers”, “a gentle voice”. Their descriptions also included some of their own invented terms, such as “a quavery voice”. This recognition of the quality of the singer’s voice reinforces the idea of how important the human voice is in music; how it humanizes abstract sound and gives it human associations. Goddard, (cited in Langer, 1953) described it as “from tones strange to tones familiar. In vocal music the mystic features of musical sound have a human aspect” (p.144).

Lyrics

Knowing the ‘words’ was an important aspect of listening to a song. It seemed that learning a song was all about learning the words and making meaning from those words. When they could not make meaning because – either the content of the song seemed “too grown up” or “too dirty” - they did not like the songs. Being able to make meaning or give meaning to the song relied heavily on the listeners being able to understand the lyrics. They did this in a variety of ways, going beyond the immediately available material on CD inserts. They spoke of reading about artists in magazines and in the newspapers, and how knowing about the performer helped them to get more meaning from the song. They used glimpses of commercially prepared videos used to advertise an artist’s latest CD- or a compilation of same-genre songs. They did it through repeated watching of commercially prepared videos, watching music television shows, the television news, and television programmes about music celebrities. They interpreted the lyrics according to their experiences of the world, based on their own expectations and understandings. The stories behind the songs and the artists were a strong theme in the questions the children had about their preferred music: “Why did you choose this topic for a song?” (Sarah’s question) would sum up the questions the children had about the music they liked and the music they did not like. It may be that the children are using the music as a way of becoming enculturated to society as opposed to being enculturated to the music.

An important aspect of the lyrics for two of the children was that they felt they gained some form of guidance or advice from the song. This was extended to the behaviour of the performer, the way they dressed, the types of vehicle they drove, the way they spoke.

Extra-musical

Mood enhancement/mood change

The participants spoke of various ways they used music to intensify or alter their moods. They used music as a means of intensifying or reflecting their moods, as a way to alter their moods, such as relaxing at bedtime, to calm down during a heated situation within the family or with a friend; or as a source of advice. This latter point was important for two of the children.

The mood enhancing or intensifying aspect of their preferred music was important to five of the participants. Each of them spoke about how it helped them to relax in a variety of situations. There was also evidence of music being used to escape situations they had difficulty coping with. It allowed them a private space or time to come to terms with relationship difficulties, sibling issues, and loneliness, to calm down and work things through.

Instruments

Only one of the participants volunteered thoughts or views on the place of instruments within the music they had chosen. In each case, they only commented on it when questioned directly. Andrew went as far as to say he hadn't thought about instruments at all, going on to say that he "made up words for stuff without a singer." The other children seemed to give the impression that instruments were important to "make something into music" but that was not what they were listening to or for

within the music. It seemed that it was a given, perhaps even taken for granted and did not need to be specifically recognized or stated.

I was surprised by this apparent lack of interest, observation and knowledge in the instrumentation of the music they listened to. I wondered why this was the case. Maybe they had not been exposed to performances or concerts featuring live musicians; maybe they had some idea that instruments were not used but generated by computers, maybe they took instruments as a given that didn't need to be mentioned. One of the suggestions explaining this perception is that music videos do not usually show instrumentalists, only the singers, so they are invisible. With music experiences coming predominantly from recorded music and music videos, the only human aspect of the music is the voice, with the human aspect of playing an instrument not being visible.

The language of music: confusions and inventions

During the interviews I found I needed the children to clarify what they meant by some of the terms they used. It became obvious to me that these children were not familiar with conventional musical language and that at times they may have used one word or term to explain or describe two concepts. I think the participants may have used words describing vocal quality as a way of talking about or describing the melody of the song they had chosen, as well as describing the vocal quality of the chosen artist. Each of the participants sang part of a song at least once during their interviews, to demonstrate a point, or to identify a part they liked. All sang the part in tune and were rhythmically accurate. It is possible that at those times they were sharing the part of the melody they particularly enjoyed listening to, but did not have the language to describe it as such. As the children all seemed to sing along with the music they liked to listen to, it might well be that melody is the dominant element, not the lyrics. Jourdain (1997) puts it this way:

Throughout the world melodies constitute the basic unit of musical experience, if only because most people cannot remember much more than melodic contour. Many people become engrossed in music only when they covertly (or not so covertly) sing along. (p.256)

Summary

In this chapter, I have examined the emerging themes from the first set of interview with the Year Six children where we discussed their music preferences and in some cases their dislikes. I reflected on the conflict of roles between teacher and researcher. I have identified some of the ways music is used by the children and wonder whether the music the children listen to is part of the enculturation process or the result of enculturation into society. I also looked at the confusions caused by the use of various musical terms and invented terms the children used.

In the next chapter I examine and reflect on the themes which emerge from the second interview where the children share their responses to four pieces of “classical” music I asked them to listen to.

Chapter Six: Responses to classical music

Introduction

In this chapter, I will examine the responses the six children had to four pieces of classical music that I had chosen. I will describe the usage of the term “classical” in relation to music, and will go on to give my reasons for choosing each of the pieces. After examining the emerging themes from this interview I will reflect on the experience of a group interview.

The Music

The term classical music has, according to Scholes (1983), three distinct meanings. The first describes music from roughly the end of the sixteenth century through to the end of the eighteenth century, “in which a more or less consciously accepted formalistic scheme of design is evident, with an emphasis on elements of proportion and of beauty” (p.195). The composers Mozart and Haydn are considered the best examples of this period. The antithesis of this is music that expresses emotion, or represents pictorial ideas, often called Romantic music.

The second meaning is that of music which has permanent value because of its continuing desirability. The antithesis of this is Modern music, as it has not had time to prove its staying power.

The third meaning is that which perhaps the most common use of the term: music that is not “Popular”, popular in the sense of music specifically produced for mass consumption by record companies.

The music I chose would best fit the third meaning. Each of these pieces had distinctive features that not only made them different from the others selected, but also made them distinctly different from the prevailing hip-hop/popular music that prevailed in the first set of interviews. Each of these is also strongly in the Western Art Music tradition. The tonalities within the music would be familiar, as would the rhythms, as the popular music the children listened to shares many attributes, and could be said to be derived from this tradition. The selection of music illustrated a variety of tempos, dynamics, instrumentations and timbres.

Each of these pieces was under two minutes long. I thought that as the children were unfamiliar with instrumental music and choral music, anything longer would be too difficult to retain their interest and concentration.

I also chose these pieces because as far as I could gather, none had been used for advertisements or as theme music for television programmes; they did not come with a “story” attached. As far as I could tell, they did not have built-in associations.

I chose “Florin Dance” by Knopfler because it is in the style of a traditional folk dance. This music was written in 1997 for the film ‘The Princess Bride’. It is in the style of a medieval folk dance and played on acoustic instruments – flute, violin, and a hand drum.

Dies Irae from Requiem by Mozart has voices that are different from those preferred by the children in that it is a choral work in four-part harmony, with a symphony orchestra. At times, men’s voices are heard clearly and at others the women’s voices and there are parts where all the voices are heard.

The choir singing in Latin added another dimension to the music. The beat is strong and there are variations in the dynamics.

Beethoven's Scherzo from Symphony No. 9 was chosen because it is an orchestral work, with a vigorous beat and marked dynamic changes.

Dreaming – Opus 15 No 7 by Schumann was chosen because it is a solo piano piece. While it has a steady, underlying beat the music is performed with a freeness and flexibility which Scholes (1983) describes as “give and take within a limited unit of the time-scheme” (p.894).

The Interview

Setting

The interview took place in a classroom when the class was having a technology lesson at another school. Five of the interviewees were present; the sixth one was absent from school because of illness. She requested her responses to the music be included when she took part in the third interview.

Florin Dance – Knopfler

I started by playing the Florin Dance music to remind the children of which piece we were to talk about. Facial expressions on three of the five children present suggested boredom or lack of interest, one appeared confused and the other one was quite animated and hummed along with the music.

Three of the participants said this was OK music. Sophia said it would be “good as background music on a game”. The other two agreed. Chrissie did not like the music at all, and all her comments were negative throughout, as we spoke about this piece. David thought it was “Cool”, and that it had a

“Cool tune”. He hummed the tune nearly all the time we were speaking about this music, only stopping when he had a comment to add to the discussion.

Andrew was the first of the three who considered the music to be background music for a game, to mention that when he first heard the music he thought it sounded like a dance. He specifically stated that he was “sure there are tap-dancers dancing in there” and that he didn’t like tap-dancing sounds.

All of the children thought the music came from ‘some-where else, not here.’ Suggestions included; French music, Gypsy music, music from “The Lord of the Rings”, and music from Scotland. There was also a reference to a party scene from the movie ‘Titanic’; Sarah thought it was like the music “where the people were having a party. Not the posh people, the other ones”. Chrissie thought it was party music “where people stamp their feet and clap their hands”, but “probably not here in New Zealand.”

David was sure it was dancing music but that it sounded like “the Irish music I heard when I was with my dad in Blenheim. I went to an Irish pub to watch the rugby, so this must be Irish music”.

Emerging themes

Two main themes that emerged from this discussion were firstly, the ‘foreignness’ of the music and secondly, that of the apparent need the children had to attach a story to the music. They constantly referred to movies and the visual images associated with them.

A lesser theme was that of its being some kind of dance music. David was the only one who had had some real-life experience with similar live music. He could hear the instruments playing as he listened. He mimed playing a guitar at one point and a drum at another time.

Sarah again emphasized the need for music to 'make sense, to have meaning.' Her comment about the music being played at a party in the Titanic movie "not the posh people, the other ones" raised the idea of music as an indicator of class, and the idea of high art and low art.

Dies Irae – Mozart

While this piece played, the children looked uncomfortable. They looked at each other and giggled nervously. David was the first to comment about it saying, "It's not that bad. It's funny because it sounds like they're singing 'bolognaise' and it made me laugh". Each of the children made the comment that the words did not make sense. Sarah expressed most strongly, saying "You can't make any sense of the words and I think the words are important in a song".

Sophia put it this way:

You can't really make any sense of the words, because there's probably over a hundred people singing the same song and it gets kind of annoying because you can't hear the words and it sounds really weird; like there's a million different voices going at different times and it's really weird, confusing music.

Chrissie thought it was "good for music from another country". She did not say much during the discussion, appearing to have been overwhelmed by the music, not being able to make sense of it. The

idea of it being from another country appeared to give her a solid reason for not being able to understand it or make any sense of it.

Andrew thought this “Wouldn’t be a choice of song you would listen to. It gets irritating; the voices singing the same thing over and over and over again”. He also said it was music he might come to like when he got older. The others all nodded in agreement.

Sophia echoed this, adding, “You might hear this if you were at someone’s house and they were like really posh and they were trying to impress someone and it’s all tidy”. The others all nodded at this, murmuring agreement.

David made a tentative suggestion that the music could be “about elves in a tree or something”, but this was not picked up by the other children.

Sarah and Sophia developed an idea of the music being good for a scene in an old movie about a war, “a really dramatic part”, where “lots of people had died and everyone was in a church remembering them. Not a funeral, a memorial, something like that”.

David said he could hear drums, violins and a flute. Sarah said, “I think most of the sounds in this music come from people’s mouths”, and Sophia added that there were “millions of people all singing different parts. The guys are singing a bit and the girls are singing a bit”.

Emerging Themes

The need for the students to make meaning by attaching a story to the music was a strong theme to emerge. David's using the word 'bolognaise' could be seen as an attempt to bring the sung words back in to his own field of experience. The girls used the imagery of a movie to get or give some meaning to the music.

Sophia's comments about someone being really posh and trying to impress someone again raise the idea of music taste being an indicator of class or aspirations of class. The other participants, with the exception of Chrissie, agreed with her observation.

The texture of the music was commented on several times, reflecting the density of the arrangement with women's voices, men's voices and an orchestra all performing at the same time. Sophia, in her first interview, said the reason she liked the song she preferred to listen to most was that it had different kinds of voices she could follow. She liked the way it had different things to listen to and follow. She reinforced this idea by saying she disliked another song for its simplicity as there was only one voice and a guitar. Perhaps the texture of this music was too 'dense' for her, or she had not been able to identify the melodies within the piece, which made her say the music was confusing.

Scherzo from Symphony No 9 – Beethoven

As the music played all of the participants except for Sarah made conducting movements.

Chrissie, Andrew and David all said they felt as though they "couldn't help" moving their arms and legs while the music was playing.

Andrew: "I wanted to stay still but the music made me move."

David: "I started moving my arms and legs. It just happens."

Chrissie: "I couldn't help moving to the music. Some music is like that."

Sarah sat quite still, as if she could not relate to what the others were doing. She made the first comment. Sarah had expectations of the music she listened to, and this music did not match them. The contrast in dynamics seemed to cause her some consternation:

It's odd; it's really loud and then it goes really quiet, and then really loud again. It's like it's giving you a mixed message of what the music is. You can't really tell what style it is because it's loud and then quiet and it's weird to understand it.

Chrissie echoed the dislike of the contrast in dynamics: "I don't really like it because it goes loud and then quiet. It's annoying." Barbara specifically mentioned that the way it "goes loud and then quiet is really annoying."

Sarah was quite forceful in expressing her opinion during this part of the interview. She mentioned on several occasions that the music "had no meaning". "It's got no meaning". "I don't know what it means". "The composer or the orchestra or the singers, the music has a meaning for them, only not for the listeners". "What does this music mean to the people who made it?"

Chrissie, Andrew, and David, Sophia and Sarah toyed with ideas about movie scenes the music could be used for, but seemed to lack conviction. Chrissie showed some confusion in the use of the musical term "tempo". She said, "I'd need to know why they have different tempos, the louds and the quiet." None of the other participants commented on her use of the term. There seemed to be some agreement

that it was dramatic. Sara and Sophia both said it sounded as though it came from a movie or a TV show.

Emerging themes

The main themes to emerge from this discussion were movement and drama. Four of the children 'conducted' as the music played, and they also commented on their need to move when they heard the music.

The extreme contrast in dynamics did make an impact on the children. It seemed to perplex them and to a degree unsettle them.

Dreaming - Schumann

All of the participants said they liked this music. Five of them said it was the one they liked best of the four pieces they had been given. The other, Chrissie, said it was "slow and boring, like slow dancing. It would be good for a movie where there's a funeral." This comment elicited some discussion. The agreed outcome was that it would be played at a funeral, "for people to listen to, or at a memorial service".

All of the children referred in one way or another to how relaxing they found the music: "It made me want to go to sleep" (David); "I used this for going to sleep with" (Andrew); "It's repetitive and relaxing" (Sarah); "It's good for thinking about stuff" (Sophia); "It's good for just chillin'" (Barbara). There was a discussion about why the music felt relaxing. The discussion revolved around the beat of the music. They had ideas about the beat, and how they really "couldn't keep the beat because sometimes it's not there". Ben put it this way, "It's like there's a beat but it's like there are a few

beats and then not much, like there's no beat at all, then it comes back". The use of rubato in this piece seemed to at once intrigue and puzzle. Sarah said she thought all music has to have some sort of beat and Sophia said this music "did and didn't".

During the interview there were two occasions when musical terminology eluded the participants. Once was when Sophia spoke at length about the 'dynamics':

The dynamics were going higher but hitting the lower keys as well. They were put together, before they finish with the other ones. Sometimes it's like they're the same sort of a note, not a high note and not a low note, kind of in the middle.

While speaking, she mimed playing the piano, with her hands moving apart to illustrate 'higher' and 'lower' and coming together to show 'the same sort of note'. It was at this time, observing her gestures that I realised she was talking about the melodies that were being played.

All of the children hummed along with the music as it played, yet not one child referred to singing it. The second time musical terms could have helped them to describe the music more accurately was when Sophia described it as 'opera-type music'. David said it wasn't because it didn't have "someone doing this: aaaah" (Here, he vocalized a parody of a soprano voice). The other children all nodded vigorously, agreeing with him. Sophia then changed her terminology saying, "It's like orchestra music". At this point I realised she meant it was instrumental music, and not a song.

Another aspect of this music that caused discussion was the instrument used. Sarah said, "It's something sad someone would play at old peoples' parties or funerals. They would play the *actual piano*." (Her emphasis) The others all wondered if it was a piano, or if it was some computer-

generated music. At the end of the interview Sarah again spoke about the piano saying this recording was “someone playing the piano properly”.

Emerging themes

There were two main themes from this piece of music: mood and beat. All the interviewees spoke of how relaxing the music was, and gave examples of where and when this music would be appropriate to be played. The lack of a steady, metrical beat performed consistently throughout the piece seemed to puzzle the children.

The children discussed the musical elements of this piece far more than they did for any other pieces of music. They discussed it within the context of the mood of the music as a way to describe why the music had the effect it did. Their discussion covered the elements of beat, rhythm, melody, timbre and dynamics.

Emerging themes from the group interview

These four pieces of music seemed to be outside the experiences of these children. The music the children shared and discussed in the first set of interviews was music they had grown up with; they were familiar with the sounds, voices, lyrics and forms of the music, and it had been part of their growing up. The music was part of the story of the children’s lives, it had a place and they shared the experiences of the music with parents, siblings, extended family members, friends and peers. The music I chose for them to listen to was not part of a shared experience. Gee (2002) speaks of children making sense of their experiences within the social practices of their own community. This is part of the enculturation process. By giving them pieces of music that were outside their experiences, and asking them to listen to them at least twice, I was exposing them to an experience and giving them no

frames of reference. The children created their own words, expressions and stories to put the music within their own experience.

The need for narrative

Across the four pieces of music, the main theme to emerge was the apparent need for there to be some sort of 'story' attached to the music. The suggestions for scenes from movies where the music could be used were the way this showed. Stories seemed to be the way the children could give the music some form of 'meaning.' The lack of words or lyrics they could use, as reference points to provide meaning, seemed to make the selected samples largely inaccessible. This 'extra-musical' or 'expression' type response reflects the findings by Hentschke (Swannick, 1994) children in the 10–11 age groups tend to make fewer comments on materials and musical form than they do about the expressive character of the music, often in terms of pictures or stories.

Melody

Melody emerged as an important aspect of the music that children responded to. It came through by way of body language and the way the children hummed or vocalized while the music was playing. It also became apparent when they spoke of what the music did not do or did not have. If the melody was difficult for them to detect because there was a lot happening within the music, or if the melody had an 'instrumental' melody with lots of leaps, making it difficult to sing, then the music appeared to be less liked.

Confusion

The lack of musical language gave rise to confusion. This confusion was evident to me when terms were misused. None of the children seemed aware of these misuses, but there was a sense that they

were attempting to describe elements and aspects of the music for which they did not have the words. They could not communicate their impressions and thoughts of the music to each other. It was as if they each had their own language to describe their musical experiences, there was no sense of a commonality of meaning. I imagine it to be like trying to describe a rainbow without using prepositions or the adjectives for colour, size and shape.

Gaps

There seems to be something missing in the way these children related to the music in this section, when compared to the music they liked. They did not appear to have any relationship with this music; they did not connect with it, and struggled to find some way into the music. This gives rise to further questions such as: was this because the children were unfamiliar with the style of music? Was it because they did not have the tools to decode music without English lyrics? Was the problem their lack of musical language to communicate in an unambiguous way? Was the difficulty related to their age and stage of development?

In the next chapter I examine the findings of the final interview. In this interview the children discuss the features of 'good' and 'bad' music and give examples. Themes which emerge are examined both as group themes and individual's themes.

Chapter Seven: What are the Features of Good Music?

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the third interview of the study, during which the participants shared their ideas about what makes a piece of music good to listen to. I will examine the themes emerging from the discussion, as well as the themes relating to each study participant. Finally, I will reflect on the difficulties of interpreting the discussion.

This was a group interview with all six participants present. It got off to a slow start, with no comments being made by the members of the group. The two children who appeared to be leaders within the group then made comments that started an avalanche of responses and got things underway. The children had been asked to think about what features ‘good’ music had, and to bring an example if they could. None brought any recordings, but during the interview some songs were named.

Is there such a thing as ‘good music’?

Andrew’s response to this was that there was “somewhere out there” and Barbara chimed in “somewhere in cyber-space, in computery things”. All the other participants agreed that there was good music in cyber-space, in computers, and “out there”. They were no more specific than that.

Sarah said, “There is no such thing as good music to all people. A lot of people like music I don’t think is good music. We all like different kinds of music. We wouldn’t know if it was good music or not.” Sophia, Barbara and Chrissie agreed, and compared the songs they liked.

When asked to give an example of good music there was a mixture of genre and specific songs.

Both of the boys said they thought hip-hop was good music. David modified his choice by giving the names of some hip-hop artists he didn't like, while Andrew said assertively that "All hip-hop is good music".

Barbara named hip-hop and country music as examples of good music. David followed up on this by naming then singing the refrain of "The Coward of the County", saying he liked Kenny Rogers and he listened to his Dad's CD when they were in the car going on holiday. Chrissie named a song that none of the others had heard of and I could not hear what she said very clearly, even though I asked her to repeat it. She did not know who sang it, so my efforts at clarification did not get results.

Crazy Frog

When Sophia named "Crazy Frog", Andrew, David, Chrissie and Barbara all immediately started miming the actions of the frog character in the music video, humming or vocalizing the music and saying, "Bam, Bam". The only one who did not this was Sarah. Her comment about this music reflected the importance of words and their meaning. "It's sort of like house music, because it doesn't have any words, not real words, just "Bam, Bam", not real words. I don't really like it but it's always being played so we sort of get used to it".

The whole group discussed the music video for "Crazy Frog". David spoke about the beat in the music, and how it was good for dancing. Chrissie, Barbara and Sophia agreed with this. Sarah agreed that it was good for dancing but reiterated that it "doesn't have any meaning to it and the music video's just stupid, it doesn't make sense".

When asked if they thought “Crazy Frog” would be cool music without the video they all agreed it would. However, Sarah qualified this: “I think if it didn’t have the video I might have a little more respect for the song, because the frog in the video has got body parts they really don’t need to show”. While the two boys literally snorted at this, the girls expressed agreement and said they did not think it was right and Barbara said she “pretended they (the body parts) weren’t there”.

Manamana

The second song to feature strongly was the song “Ma-na-ma-na” by the Muppets. For the weeks leading up to the interview it had been used on television to promote the purchasing and wearing of bandanas for the charity Canteen, supporting teenagers with cancer. The words had been altered to ‘bandanana’ and featured three ‘Muppets’ – one a rough, hairy, masculine entity and two smooth, feminine beings. All the children responded positively when Andrew said he thought it was an example of a good song. They all sang some part of the song to illustrate a point. Reasons for this being an example of good music were many and varied. The contrast within the song was attractive to the children. They expressed it in various ways:

I like the guy who sounds bad (illustrates the low gravelly voice) and then the pink guys sing like they’re really good (sings in a light soprano voice). Like there’s good and bad.
(Andrew)

It sounds really cool when it goes “Bananana” (sings in low voice), and then the ladies come in (sings in light soprano voice). (David)

I reckon it’s good because it’s got loud then soft, different voices. (Sophia)

I like the loud and the soft together. (Barbara)

I think the contrast is good. Like the different tones and how they’re different; like different colours only they’re voices. (Sarah)

All the children agreed that the video was an important part of liking the song. The advertisement made it something everyone had experienced. Barbara said, "We all like it because we all know it". Andrew added, "I think we like it because the people in the video look like aliens, like they've just woken up from bed".

The humour within the video was an important feature that made this attractive to watch. The extreme contrast in voices, presentation of genders, appearance gave this song and its video comic visual and aural aspects.

Because all the children sang parts of this song, I wondered if the singability of the song was a large part of its appeal. The minimal number of words meant no difficulties with remembering lyrics, the repetition gave built-in opportunities to become familiar with the words and the limited range of the melodic motifs made for ease of recall.

Meaning

"Manamana" gave rise to a discussion on meaning. There were various interpretations of the video. Andrew saw one of the creatures appearing to have just got out of bed. Chrissie's saw the two "little guys" being bald as a sign that they had cancer. Sarah interpreted it as an example of performers singing the song without the interference of technology, which she felt got between the performer and the listener. Sophia saw it was "About Canteen, and it's got a message about kids with cancer". The one thing all the participants agreed on was that it had a message. The message seemed to come not from the words, but from the cause it was promoting. This was considered very important.

Words and Meaning

Further discussion on meaning revealed the participants' attitudes towards the 'knowing' of words. Sarah insisted that the words were the most important thing in a song. When David asked "What does it matter, it's just a song?" She responded, "If it's just a song, if it doesn't mean anything, what is the point of the song? It has to mean something." Chrissie agreed with this, but not as confidently. The other children commented on the importance of the words to them. David was the strongest in expressing the view that the words were not important. "I don't care about the words. I just want to listen. The words are not important. They're just songs. It's just the singer that matters, the words don't matter". When he talked about his love of rap songs he said he didn't like "full-on rap that's too fast to hear the words, it didn't matter because he didn't need to hear all the words anyway".

Barbara and Sophia were less forceful in their expressions of the words not mattering. Sophia mentioned that she didn't know the words to all the songs she liked. Barbara said that she didn't need to know the words, she just wanted to listen to the songs. However, she also said that she thought singers were singing songs that were important to them and that good songs were about something that was important to the person singing it. All of the participants agreed.

David said he thought rap was good music, but Sophia said it wasn't music because it was just "talking fast." She went on to say, "singing is words and music, not just words, not just speaking words". I took this to mean that melody was an important aspect of good music, or in this case a good song.

Dance

Barbara, David, Chrissie, Andrew and Sophia considered being able to dance to a piece of music important.

“You’ve *got* to be able to dance to it.” (Her emphasis) (Barbara)

“You’ve got to be able to dance to it otherwise it’s not good music.” (David)

“I like dancing to music except I’m not got good at it. I don’t dance in public, just by myself when I’m listening in my room.” (Chrissie)

“You have to be able to dance to good music.” (Sophia)

Sarah was the one who disagreed with this: “I disagree with everybody. I don’t dance very often and I always enjoy the music.”

Emerging Group Themes

Songs and their meanings

The strongest theme here was that songs were the type of music given as being ‘good’. The interesting thing about two of the songs which were discussed at length featured nonsense words and had videos that had received a great deal of air time both on television and radio.

The songs had some common features: both could be considered novelty songs; both were easy to sing, they had limited ‘lyrics’ to learn, both had videos that featured fantasy beings, and both told a story. In one case, the video showed a cartoon frog being very busy, and in the other three Muppets were presenting a song and the story line was imposed by either the viewers or in this instance by the advertising company to promote a charity. The third song mentioned in this interview was “The Coward of the County.” Three of the children sang the refrain for this when it was first mentioned. They discussed the meaning and events related in the song. Each child had a different take on the events in the song.

Singability

While there was some debate over the importance of words and the value of knowing or learning the words, being able to sing along was important whether it was out loud or 'in your head'. This gave rise to the importance of the melody as the participants gave examples but did not use the terms melody or tune. I had to interpret body language and their examples to derive this.

Beat

The importance of beat within music was very clear. It showed when they moved their bodies as they sang the examples to demonstrate a point and in the response to David's beat-boxing with his voice. All of the participants responded accurately to the beat of a song and could indicate it clearly. They did confuse it with rhythm at times when describing what they liked within a particular piece of music.

Contrast

Each of the children spoke of the importance of contrast: contrast in dynamics, contrast in vocal quality, contrast in characters portrayed in music videos.

Individuals' themes

This interview continued the tendency for each individual to have preferences. While each interview focused on a different aspect of listening to music, each individual seemed to show consistent preferences and priorities as to what was important within music.

Sarah and meaning

Sarah was particularly vocal on the theme of songs having to have meaning; that words have to make sense, have to have a worthwhile message. She also reiterated the moral aspect of songs and music

videos, saying she would “have more respect for the song if it did not have that particular video, because it showed body parts we did not need to see”. This had first shown in the interview dealing with a song she did not like where she referred to the use of the word “touch” and expressed the opinion that it was “not right”. Her responses, over all, were, perhaps more mature than those of the other participants. She spoke of every one liking different songs and that each person would have a different view as to what made “good music.” She was the one participant who seemed to be able, at times to generalize her ideas and thoughts. “I think one of the reasons it appeals is that quite a lot of the music these days uses hi-tech instruments and it drowns out the meaning in the music”.

She was also able to express her views clearly and confidently, not being swayed by others’ opinions, or cowed by their comments on her insistence of “meaning”.

Sophia

Sophia’s recurring themes were those of being able to sing the song, and being able to dance to the music. She did not use the terms melody or tune. I interpreted her gestures and vocal examples as meaning melody. Words mattered only as far as they could make a difference to the dance moves she was devising. She referred several times to the importance of “proper singing”. I interpreted this to mean singing in tune, a pleasant vocal quality, or melody depending on the context and her body language.

Barbara

Barbara was the only girl who made references to the music videos and how important they were for knowing what the music was about. Videos influenced how she thought of the song and what meaning

she gained from or gave to the song. Dancing was important, and again this was influenced by the music videos she has seen. She tried to make her dancing match the dancing in the videos.

Chrissie

Chrissie was perhaps the least confident and least articulate of the six participants. In the individual interview, she spoke at length about singing the songs she liked and the importance of the singer's 'voice'. I think that at times she was talking not just about the quality of the singer's voice but also the importance of the melody. She gave some examples of parts where she liked the singers' voices; these were also the parts she hummed as we were walking to the interview room. She did mention the meaning of the words in the first interview and spoke of how the music did not make sense in the second interview, but only mentioned this when Sarah was insistent about the importance of words and "meaning". She was the most vocal about the meaning of the 'Manamana' song and how it was about supporting Canteen.

Andrew

Andrew was perhaps the most difficult to interview. He chose a radio station for the preferred music interview, and was largely silent for the other two interviews. It was only with robust insistence from the others that he would say anything, sitting quietly, nodding his head with some comments and gazing blankly into the middle distance at others. I was not overly sure much was 'real' and how much was some kind of 'performance' as he took the role of being cool and slightly quirky. Perhaps this was his way of showing he was his own person and popular opinion did not phase or affect him. He was not afraid to use terms like 'cuddly' when describing music, and was aware of using music to intensify his mood, or to alter it. The main theme I got from working with Andrew was his individuality and his non-

expectation of instant gratification; his willingness to accept different music and the frustrations, joys and associations each song brought as it played on the radio.

David

The over-riding impression of David's interest in music was beat, beat and more beat. Secondary to this was his fascination with and accessibility to many forms of technology and media to access music. He spoke more often than the others of watching music videos on TV, using his mobile to text requests, record songs, and identify songs. He referred to his stereo and the stereo in his Dad's vehicle several times. He was also the only one to relate an experience of attending a live music performance. New Zealand artists dominated his love of hip-hop and rap music. He was the only participant to talk of New Zealand artists during the series of interviews. He spoke more often than any other participant of sharing music with family members, watching music videos with his mum and sister, listening to music with his sister, and listening to his Dad's music in the car on long journeys.

Summary

The over-riding theme emerging from this interview is that the children could relate to the music. 'Good' music gives a message. It tells a story, it gives advice, it makes you want to sing or dance, it improves your mood or intensifies your mood. You listen to the music, you give it time, attention and a chance to become part of you. If the music itself does not do that, then it can become good music by being associated with a good cause, or a product or service that makes people happy or does good works. The human aspects are very important.

Each of these points was obscured to some extent by the children's inability to accurately and consistently describe the aspects of the music or song they were talking about. The lack of common

language to describe their experiences to each other and me was frustrating and limiting. Several times during this interview, I got the impression that the children did not really understand what the others were saying, that they were talking at cross-purposes, and that they did not seem to have a common language to describe what they were trying to communicate. I also got the sense that it was not an issue for them. I had a sense that I was not part of what they were saying, that I was an out sider.

In the next chapter I examine some of the implications arising from these findings, and make some recommendations based on the findings in the light of “*The New Zealand curriculum - draft for consultation 2006*” document.

Chapter Eight: Implications

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the implications of this study. I table some of the questions which have emerged for the findings of this study, and share some of the thoughts of those involved in music education research. I will examine these in the light of *The Arts Curriculum Learning Area introduction - Draft* (2006) document. I offer some recommendations based on the findings of this study.

Narrative, discourse and communication

The children in this study spoke at length about the pieces of music they listened to. They were expert listeners with a great deal of experience. However, the bulk of their responses revolved around the “stories” they gained from the music, whether it came from the lyrics, an evocative sound, the glimpse of a music video, or an association with a product or event. Very few responses reflected knowledge of the elements of music. When they were talking together in the group interviews, they did not seem to share a common language for the ideas they were communicating. The children used their own verbal language to describe what they experienced within the music they heard. At no time did I get the impression they felt limited or constrained in their expressions of responses. This suggests that Gee’s (2002) theory of discourse, based on the idea of language in its social context is applicable here. The children spoke of what they heard, what they responded to and how they responded to elements of the music they heard. They used their own language, their own senses of the words they used. I was the outsider; I was the one out of context. I was the one who had trouble with the meanings of words and what the children were saying about how they experienced not only their preferred music, but also the “classical” music I asked them to respond to.

The children were aware of the power of music to communicate, and they were willing to share their thoughts and ideas about both the music they preferred to listen to and “classical” music examples. The music was used as a starting point for imaginative stories of their own or it triggered the recall of events and activities in their lives. These children shared mainly affective or associative responses. Musical terms and references to the elements of music seemed to be missing or the terms were used in ways that had meaning only to the user. This reflected Hentschke’s work with Brazilian and English children (as cited in Swanwick, 1994, p.118) in that the children responded to the extra-musical qualities of the music.

Dunn (2005) suggests that putting listening experiences into words is akin to using a form of notation, such as graphs or visual signs. These serve as a means to analyze and shape what the listener perceives. While words or other forms of notation may be both limited and limiting in what they convey, they can help to enrich and enhance the way music is perceived by the listener.

These children did not appear to be worried that they used words in different ways and applied different meanings. They accepted each others’ contributions, building on them in the group interviews, expanding on an idea, or quietly reflecting on what others said.

Affective and associative terms used by the children are authentic responses to music. They are valid expressions of students’ listening experiences, even though they are less measurable and less predictable than responses using the musical terminology and vocabulary of formal music education.

The children in this study each preferred different pieces of music, and each demonstrated they had an understanding of the music. However, their responses were heavily based on the expressive “extra-

musical” qualities of the music, the affective and associative qualities, reflecting what they had grasped intuitively. However, each of these children could indicate the beat, could recognize songs from the introductory notes and sing or hum the chosen songs in tune. Nevertheless, these children had not had any formal music training, other than Sophia with one or two guitar lessons at the time of the first interview. They did not appear to have the words or language to describe in musical terms what they heard, but they could respond in ways that showed their musical ability.

What does this mean for the classroom music teacher?

This study suggests that children construct their own understandings and knowledge about the music they listen to. So what is left? Do children need to learn anything else about the music they choose to listen to? Do they need to experience music other than that they prefer or encounter in their own social context? How important is it for them to share a common vocabulary or language of musical terms? What differences can be made to how children relate to unfamiliar music?

Various researchers and educators have put forward reasons for including music in education. Csikszentmihalyi and Sciefele (1992) include the ideas that it is a meaningful activity for human creativity, an environmentally friendly way to use leisure time and the value it has for human evolution and the development of human individuals. Eisner (2003) describes three reasons for music's role in education: its cognitive contributions; what it enables one to express or know; and the kind of experience music makes possible. Swanwick (1994) observes that although none of us can avoid contact with music and intuitive knowledge is open to everyone, music as part of the school curriculum offers the possibility of levels of analysis, which can “enlarge and deepen intuitive response” (p.118). He expands on this saying that intuitive response and analysis work together to

generate musical knowledge, and that “formal education provides a framework for sensitive analysis” (p.119).

Dunn (2005) says that intuitive listening can be influenced by education. He suggests that an important goal of music education is to enhance an individual’s ability to interact meaningfully with music over a lifetime.

The curriculum project the sound arts - music achievement objectives draft document (MOE, 2005) states for levels three and four in the Understanding Music in Context strand that

Students will share ideas about sound environments, music and technologies from historical, social and cultural contexts. Students will consider the purposes and functions of music. (p.1)

In the Communicating Ideas strand of the same document it states

(Level 3) Students will reflect on live and recorded sound and music (p.1).

(Level 4) Students will reflect on the communicative qualities of live and recorded sound and music. (p.1)

These statements are describing preferred outcomes of children’s learning. They are heavily dependent on the children’s ability to share ideas and to communicate not only to and with the teacher, but also to and with their peers. The implication of this is that the children and the teacher share a common language. If a teacher is to develop appreciation and analysis of music works then

they are already in a different cultural setting to the students and this gives rise to the issues described by Gee (2002).

The core of music education is the development of aural skills. Teachers of classroom music programmes have a role in developing and extending the musical experiences of children. Teachers need to give children a variety of opportunities to develop children's understanding of music. These range from creating their own works using different materials, technologies and forms, through to physical movement to enhance musical memory (Swanwick, 1994, p.132) and including listening to and reflecting on the qualities of recorded performances, live performances and the performances of their peers' works. Teachers not only need to be open to the existing ideas and knowledge children have about music they listen to, they need to acknowledge and value the importance of starting with those understandings as they work towards the extension and enhancement of the existing knowledge. Music educators then need to develop strategies that work towards developing the children's ability to interact with and relate to music more meaningfully.

Recommendations

This study shows that children at the Year Six level have ideas about music and that they are prepared to communicate these ideas. What is suggested as a result of this study is a need to develop further the children's ability to communicate their responses unambiguously, and that they include more music terms to extend their existing affective and associative responses.

The recommendations I put forward fall into two broad areas: skills and attitudes. For the first area, I suggest the following

- The active recruitment and training of teachers with music training to work in primary schools.

- Primary schools actively recruiting teachers with the skills to teach music proactively in their classrooms.

For the area of attitudes, I suggest the following

- That music teachers develop an awareness of and empathy with primary school aged children that acknowledges and accepts the understandings and knowledge pre-teenaged children have formed about the music they listen to.
- That music teachers develop an understanding of the importance of “extra-musical” elements which relate to and arise from the music children listen to.

Future research opportunities

Research opportunities in the fields of primary school aged children’s responses to music and of teaching classroom music at primary school level abound, as there seems to be little research into either in the New Zealand setting. Further possibilities include

- The responses of children the same age from schools with different decile rankings.
- The responses of children who learn a musical instrument.
- The approaches and reflections of classroom music teachers on effective music listening programmes.
- What do children consider an effective listening programme?
- Longitudinal studies could investigate the changes to children’s responses to and expectations of the music they choose to listen to over time.
- The importance children put on being able to communicate their ideas about music clearly and unambiguously.
- Comparisons of the verbal and written language used to describe a piece music.

Conclusion

I started this study trying to find gaps. Gaps in the children's understandings of music they liked to listen to, gaps in their experiences of unfamiliar music and the gap between my understanding of what they knew and understood about music and what I thought they should know. I was attempting to bridge the gap in my understanding of where children were at in their understanding of listening to music. The literature I read gave me a sense of the complexity and wide ranging outcomes of a study examining children's experiences of music. As such, I consider it the starting point of this study.

Initially I thought the findings indicated there were two over-riding themes, narrative and function, the importance of the story the children somehow gleaned from the lyrics or the expressive qualities of the music, the narrative the children then translated into dance, or their own lyrics, relating to their own situation, creating their own stories making it their own. However, as time passed and different ways of looking at the data were examined I came to realise that I had underestimated the importance of the affective and associative responses to music. My own music training, to gain mastery of various instruments and to be a "better" music teacher in the classroom had overlaid this level of responses with musical terminology in my own pursuit of accuracy and precision of language.

The children in the study revealed a relationship with music that was authentic and real. It was grounded in their own experiences, relationships and everyday life. The *Arts Essence Statement - working document* (MOE, 2005) states that students can 'appreciate and value the aesthetic qualities of music' (p.1) by learning to make sense of sound, and that one of the ways children develop literacy in the worlds of sound is by listening and responding. Music educators need to be aware that many of the qualities children appreciate in music are not necessarily musical, and that 'music' appreciation may be approached through the extra-musical responses listening to a piece of music gives rise to.

The children in this study showed they are selective in what they choose to listen to and what they purchase. They are critical of what the recording companies offer them.

The children in the study showed how they use music: to enhance or alter their moods, as a source of advice about relationships and behaviour, to provide opportunities to sing and dance. The artists are studied, seen as role models for behaviour, performing styles and dress codes.

I have concluded that each of these children has a relationship with music as a listener, and this study has been exploring that relationship. It is not a one-way relationship. It is a two-way process in which the children gain advice, mood enhancement, mood change, enjoyment, something to sing with or to, something that provides opportunities to sing and dance, company when they're lonely, timeout when stressed, a common ground to share with siblings and parents. In return, music gets the children's attention and their time. The children believe in the music's ability to entertain, console, inform, and enhance their lives. It seems to become an entity in itself, taking on a 'personality' to suit what the child needs at the time of listening.

The over-riding theme emerging from this study is gaps: gaps in the musical knowledge the children have; gaps in their understandings brought about by their expectation to find meaning in material meant for an adult audience; gaps in the understandings of the teacher as researcher; the gap between listening for something in a piece of music in a musically analytical way and responding to the music in an associative and or affective way.

Summary

In *The New Zealand Curriculum – Draft for Consultation 2006* (MOE, 2005) it states

Each learning area has its own language or languages. By learning to use them, students become able to think in different ways, access new areas of knowledge, and see their world from new perspectives. (p.12)

It goes on to say that in each learning area students need specific help from their teachers as they learn the specialist vocabulary associated with that area, and how to communicate knowledge and ideas in appropriate ways. This element of the key competencies relates strongly to the findings of this study.

This study suggests the importance of music for Year Six children and shows some of their understandings. It points to the differences in how ideas about music are communicated and the gaps between the individuals' understandings and the understandings a teacher and a student have when discussing the same piece of music. This study is not just exploring responses to music, it examines issues around how and what people communicate their responses and ideas about music.

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Appendix 1

Questions for interview

Key Question

What is it about this piece of music that makes it special for you?

Further question to get more in depth responses.(Not all of these would be used, and not necessarily in this order)

What does this music mean to you?

Could
you tell
me more
about
this?

How does it stand out from other music you listen to?

When would you listen to this music?

Could
you put
that
another
way for
me?

How often would you listen to this music/ song/ piece?

When did you first notice this music/ song/ piece?

What have you noticed happens to you as you listen ?

How has that changed as you listen to it more and more?

Could
you give
me an
example?

Is there anything in particular you listen to or for as the music is playing?

If so, what is it?

How would you describe this music?

Where do you prefer to listen to this music?I

If you had a question about this music/ song/ piece, what would it be?